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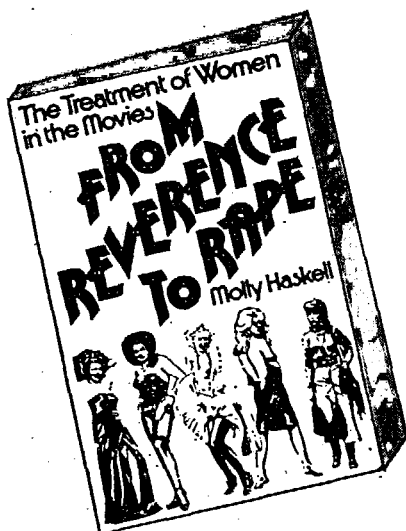
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Editorial

In an article in *Screen Education* n 10/11 (cited by Christine Gledhill in this issue of *Screen*), Cary Bazalgette writes:

'If students are not trained to ask basic questions about the images which confront them, if they are not asked to examine the knowledge and assumptions which they already possess, they are being denied the opportunity to develop the most simple and essential critical tools. They are being trained instead to accept given definitions and, very often, given moral positions as well.'

However liberal forms of film education based on response may seem to be, however much the teacher attempts to withdraw in favour of his or her students' own personal responses, unless one assumes a complete aesthetic sense innately present in the child, the irrational character of the notion of response will mean that an unarguable taste is being transferred from teacher to student in a process dependent on the authority of the teacher and reinforcing that authority and the ideological formation that confirms it. The existence of some more objective knowledge of the subject about which the students are being taught does not of itself solve this problem; the presentation of a mathematical theorem can be followed by the rhetorical question 'It is so, is it not?' But at least this knowledge provides the student with another authority to turn against that of the teacher, the authority of its procedures of judgement and testing. In this perspective the lack of any established body of knowledge about the cinema puts the film teacher in an even more acute predicament than his colleague teaching literature. This was and is SEFT's argument for the proposition that a society of film and TV teachers must contribute directly to the production and dissemination of knowledge in the area as well as dealing with the problems specific to teaching about film – hence *Screen* as well as *Screen Education*.

Screen's most sustained effort in this direction has perhaps been its presentation and extension of contemporary developments in the semiotics of the cinema, drawing especially on work being

done in France. The writers we have referred to, both in the fields of literary semiotics and in that of cinema semiotics (eg Barthes, Kristeva, the editorial boards of *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Cinéthique*), have long insisted on the limitations of the tradition of structuralist semiotics and aesthetics deriving from the work of Saussure, Jakobson and Hjelmslev, argued that this tradition was condemned to empiricist or phenomenological description or formalism so long as it took as given a subject, empirical or transcendental, in possession of the codes giving it access to meaning, and proposed that the problem of the relation between subject and signifier could only be resolved by resort to historical materialism, but a historical materialism that has integrated the scientific revolution inaugurated by Freud and psychoanalysis. Thus psychoanalytic concepts have appeared in many articles translated in *Screen*, at least since the *Cahiers du cinéma* reading of *Young Mister Lincoln* in v 13 n 3, and a number of members of the Editorial Board have made more and more explicit use of them too (see the Editorial to v 15 n 1, articles in v 15 n 2, 15 n 4 and 16 n 1). A number of factors make this an apposite moment to attempt to explore these concepts more directly. Firstly, the Chicago and Berkeley based film magazine *Jump Cut* published in its fourth number a critique of the special issue of *Screen* on Brecht and the Cinema (v 15 n 2) by one of its associate editors, Julia Lesage, who teaches film at Chicago Circle, a critique which concentrates on the use made of Freudian concepts in that issue. We are pleased to be able to reprint this critique, since it and the reply by the authors of the articles Lesage attacks help clarify many of the issues at stake. Secondly, Christian Metz, whose work in cinema semiotics has served as a constant point of reference for *Screen's* exploration of this area, has written a presentation of the variety of ways psychoanalysis can enter film analysis and in particular its implications for the topic which has always most deeply interested him, the study of the specifically cinematic signifier. Without necessarily accepting all Metz's formulations, we are glad to be able to publish a translation of this article for its exposition of the way psychoanalysis is being applied to film in France.

However, not all of *Screen's* Editorial Board are convinced that the uses of psychoanalytic concepts exemplified by the articles we publish in this number can contribute to the development of a knowledge of film in the sense for which SEFT established *Screen*. The following reservations could be mentioned. Firstly, that as an area of applied psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic studies of film will remain tributary to psychoanalysis proper in two respects: any knowledge produced will remain dependent for its authority on a practice outside film study itself, ie on clinical analysis; and that knowledge will be of more value as corroboration of the theses of psychoanalytic theory than for its contribution to any understanding of the cinema. Secondly, that the type of readings of film

6 encouraged by this use of psychoanalytic theory will relapse into a new form of practical criticism, substituting the dubious values with which psychoanalysis has been invested, if it did not originally imply them, for Leavisite notions of a coherent cultural tradition. And thirdly, that the esoteric way the articles drawing on these developments of psychoanalysis have been presented in *Screen* represents a lack of real engagement with the politico-cultural issues which should form the context of *Screen's* work. These counter-positions will be articulated at length in future numbers of *Screen*. In the mean time, we hope that the present issue will illuminate the articles in *Screen* which have implicitly or explicitly appealed to psychoanalysis in the study of film, and serve as the basis for further developments in the same direction, or positive criticism of them.

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As Christian Metz argues in the article that follows, also published in French in *Communications* n 23, May 1975, the psychoanalytic tradition inaugurated by Freud has become so divided that any discussion of psychoanalysis must specify what psychoanalysis it is referring to, and he defines his own reference point as 'the tradition of Freud and its still continuing developments, with original extensions such as those that revolve around the contributions of Melanie Klein in England and Jacques Lacan in France'. Footnotes have been added to the article where appropriate to define terms Metz uses deriving from all three of the currents he mentions, but the unfamiliarity and difficulty of the third of these currents suggest the usefulness of a longer presentation of some of the key concepts employed in this extension of Freud, explaining both its originality with respect to Freud and its claim to represent the most authentic heir to the Freudian tradition.

This extension, as Metz says, revolves around the contribution of Jacques Lacan, whose unceasing effort over the last forty years to prevent psychoanalysis from falling back into biologism (the body as empirically given) or psychologism (the mind as authentically experienced) has provided the basis for perhaps the most vigorous and vital element in contemporary psychoanalytic theory. But before going into more detail on Lacan's contribution, it is necessary to emphasise that, even in a presentation, there can be no question of elaborating an 'orthodox Lacanianism'. The very nature of Lacan's conception of theory and his rejection at all costs of a metalanguage involve as a necessary consequence that although concepts are defined in their relationships to other concepts, it is impossible to fix these relationships without falling into a discourse which is typically neurotic in its attempt to hide the effects of the unconscious (the meaning of terms is held to be something fixed and independent of the signifying chain). Lacan himself emphasised this lack of orthodoxy (which has nothing to do with any kind of liberalism) in the opening address to his Seminar over twenty years ago:

'The master breaks the silence with a sarcasm, a kick – anything at all. It is thus in the quest for meaning that a Buddhist master proceeds according to *zen* technique. For it is the pupils' business to seek the reply to their own questions. A master does not teach *ex cathedra* a completed science; he brings forth the reply when his students are on the point of discovering it themselves. This teaching is a refusal of any system. It uncovers a thought in motion – yet apt for system since it necessarily presents a dogmatic face. Freud's thought is that most perpetually

- 8 open to revision. It is an error to reduce it to outworn words. Each notion in it possesses its own life – and that is, precisely, what is called dialectics' (*Le Séminaire* tome I, *Les Ecrits techniques de Freud*, Editions du Seuil, Paris 1975, p 7).

Moreover, it is not only thus inconsistent to declare oneself a 'Lacanian', but the difficulty of Lacan's work which is a consequence of this rejection of metalanguage means that to commit oneself to the whole of his often enigmatic teaching would be foolish. Thus what follows cannot claim to be a summary of Lacan's arguments. Rather it is an attempt to integrate some of the key terms he has introduced (italicised in the text) into a continuous discourse in the hope that having encountered them thus at work, the reader will find it easier to handle their occurrence in Metz's article, and in other articles in this and previous issues of *Screen*. The crucial point is to emphasise, with Lacan, that psychoanalysis be understood as a science whose specific object is the unconscious and its formations – the unconscious being the name for that place discovered by Freud, that other scene on which the drama of the construction of the subject (this scene) is played out – its formations being those slips, dreams, symptoms, jokes and phobias which are the breaks in the univocal unwinding of the conscious text and allow us to hear the voices off that have determined its inscription. And also, and again with Lacan, that the central structure on that other scene – the structure which determines the formations (and here we mark the second essential feature of any Freudian theory) is the Œdipus complex, and more specifically its essential moment – castration. Defined as such psychoanalysis is a necessary component of historical materialism in the knowledge it produces of the construction of the subject, the latter being understood as that unity of consciousness which classical philosophy takes as the founding disposition of the world. An attachment to the subject as a primary category marks any philosophy as idealist; the virulence with which psychoanalysis rejects such a primacy has ensured it both the undying enmity of those who long for the final moment of communion when consciousness will become One, and the living gratitude of those who see it as marking an irreversible break with all idealism and religion.

Psychoanalysis concerns itself with that process by which the small human animal is turned into a male or female subject which can take its place in society. The central feature of this passage is the submission of the body to language, to the world of difference, and the determining factor in this submission is the recognition of sexual difference. If we start with the small baby (and it must be recognised from the beginning of the explanation that this story is being told in order to facilitate the isolation of theoretically

separate concepts rather than to construct the temporal stages of an invariable history), then we can postulate that under certain physical circumstances the baby feels a *need* for food which results in a cry, which in turn leads to the abolition of the need through the mother's action in bringing milk. But if the cry functions originally as a simple signal, the process by which the baby connects this signal to the abolition of need turns it into a sign, that is to say, into a mark which finds its position through its difference from not crying. And insofar as the sign is defined by what it is not, it exists within a chain of signification in which its opposite and different, not-crying, is inevitably implicated. Thus if the cry is to function as a conscious *demand* addressed to another, it must bring with it a chain of signification which is not under the subject's control and opens up the world of the unconscious – of *desire*. 9

For the moment of the cry opens up the moment of not crying, and this in turn leads on to crying, and so on, in an infinite chain which cannot be stopped at any point. Hence as soon as the cry is a sign, the abolition of need through the medium of demand does not remove the experience of that chain of need and its abolition – it has become a memory. This reformulation of the relation between desire (Freud's *Wunsch* or wish), memory and the satisfaction of need is crucial, because it resolves certain paradoxes in the Freudian identification of the 'primary processes', the psychical processes under the command of the pleasure principle, as the unconscious. For if pleasure is defined in terms of an identity of perception, ie the subject is constantly attempting to repeat an experienced moment of pleasure, then the primary processes which are in the realm of the unconscious find themselves operating in terms of perception which remains on the side of the conscious. Moreover, it is difficult to oppose a reality principle dominating the 'secondary processes' to the pleasure principle, for insofar as the reality principle relates to the objective world, it seems simply to ensure and safeguard the pleasure principle. We must discover some other reality which possesses the destructive qualities that our brute version so obviously lacks. In the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', Freud insists that 'What happens is not, for instance, that the desire becomes conscious and that its fulfilment is then hallucinated, but only the latter: the intermediate link [the desire] is left to be inferred' (*Standard Edition*, Vol I, p 342). Hence it is impossible to postulate that the hallucination (the hallucinated representation or wishfulfilment) is the reproduction of an object which the subject is already conscious of as having satisfied its need. In fact these considerations demand a new definition of the object of desire in such a way that it is radically eccentric to consciousness and absolutely irreducible to any object of need. If we think once again of the nurseling, we can see that the existence of the signifying chain entails that even at the

10 moment of not-crying and of satisfaction, the cry and the demand for the abolition of need are also there. Through the setting up of language (of signs), the small child has condemned itself to a world in which it must forever chase a satisfaction which it can only receive in death. The child will never be able to satisfy that which has been set up by language – desire.

Thus the processes of language already described enable us to understand desire as the result of need passing through demand; they also demonstrate that the processes of the unconscious are the processes of signifying. Indeed, repression can be understood as the fact that for language to operate that which gives sense to a word (the paradigmatic and syntagmatic chains into which it can enter) cannot be present with the word itself in consciousness, but is still there although absent from consciousness. Nevertheless, through the operations of language itself this unconscious area can produce another meaning in what we say, and this meaning can be brought to our attention in certain kinds of situations which we shall shortly consider. The unconscious is exactly the fact that as we speak what we say must always escape us – that as I say one thing, it says something else. The primary processes continually operate in the reproduction of identity, but this identity is not the one that has been consciously grasped – rather it is the identities suggested by the very structure of language itself. For given that each word in a language gains its value (its meaning) from the set of differences in which it is caught, it follows that for language to be set in motion there are a necessary set of absences at its heart – a necessary tearing of the word from the world so that the object can only appear there where its identity has been transformed into difference – where it can find a name. Similarly, for the speaking subject there is an absence there where he speaks – for it which speaks is continually recaptured by I who have spoken, and this ‘I’ only makes sense through another set of differential opposition (the you, she, he that I am not). But while the object arrives there where it is named – the name is constantly entering into other relationships which escape the conscious mind into identification with other words through all its paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations (cf the set of terms in the dream thoughts of Freud’s ‘botanical monograph’ dream linked with flowers: cyclamen-coca-Gärtner-blooming-crucifer-artichoke-Flora – *Standard Edition*, Vol IV, pp 169-76). It is these identifications which constantly threaten and disrupt the speaking subject.

So far our account of language has been lacking in any temporal specificity. We have suggested that there are certain features of language which account for the workings of the unconscious and desire, but we have not indicated how the unconscious is specifically structured, nor the moment at which the child actually learns to speak a language. We conflated the nurseling’s cry with a fully articulated language. It is now time to re-divide them. In the

original situation we simply have the moment of a pure difference (the cry and the silence), but while these two signifiers are to a certain extent co-extensive with experience, the operation of a whole language requires a more total divorce between the sign system and the world. The single most important break is the recognition of sexual difference. If we go back to the small human animal that has just emerged from the womb, it is a mass of undifferentiated impulses – it has no notion of itself as a unity. Around the age of six to eighteen months the small infant may be observed in an ecstasy of delight in front of a mirror. This empirical moment can be identified with the grasping of the body as unity, with the stage called the mirror phase within psychoanalytic theory. This mirror phase corresponds to a primary narcissism in which every other is seen as the same as the subject and difference is not recognised. 11

It is in this realm, which can be called the realm of the *imaginary*, that the unity of the subject, guaranteed by the unity of the body in the mirror, is projected on to the world to find in every other body the sameness that was found in the mirror. In terms of language, this stage can be understood as the conflation of the word and the thing – a necessary misrecognition (mis-cognition) which fails to place the meaning of the word in difference and opposition (in absence). To shatter this imaginary world arrives the moment of the *real*. The real understood here not as reality, which can only function after the learning of language and the eternal loss of the Thing (now dispersed into objects as an effect of the articulation of language), but as the fact of difference. And this is the real whose recognition entails repression of its existence at the same time as this recognition/repression is the necessary condition of the continuous establishment of language and desire. The narcissistic image of the body received from the mirror encounters the phallus, not understood as an object which either exists or does not exist, but as a signifier, that is to say the object (the penis) coming into play with its absence which is exactly the possibility of castration (past or future) – the possibility that the body might be different. It is this possibility, represented by the appearance of the father within the dual mother-child relationship, that sets in play the *symbolic*: introduces a rupture in the imaginary; sets up a lack; breaks the plenitude of the mirror; sets in motion desire; and introduces the Law (the prohibition of incest) based on exclusion and difference. The introduction of the symbolic allows language to function as the grasping of opposition and difference. But this recognition can never exist at the moment of speaking (else how could we say anything?). The one of the body immediately poses a two of its image which the three of difference breaks.

It may be objected that the account so far seems rather different from the received version of Freud. However, three crucial things

12 have been retained from his work: 1. the unconscious in its irreducible difference from consciousness, but now given a linguistic base; 2. the Œdipus complex and castration, but now understood rather as model of the structuration of subjectivity than as account of the existential life of the child; and 3. the analytic situation. It is this third point that has not yet been explained and requires yet another return to the first four years of the child's life. For the child encounters language issuing from the beings that surround it, and whereas it can identify these beings as others similar to itself, there is also within them another agency at work enabling them to speak language and marking them as having submitted to the Law. It is this mysterious element of the beings surrounding the child that Lacan has called the *big Other* (the capital letter marking the irreducible difference between this realm of being and the realm of the imaginary where the other simply appears as the mirror image of the self). The big Other can be equated with the unconscious present in all those who have learnt to speak language, and it is this unconscious which forms the basis for the child's interrogation of its parent's desires. The world of difference which erupts into the child's imaginary world with the recognition of the phallus is caught through a series of key terms related to the big Other and whose internalisation as the *Name of the Father* guarantee the stability of the symbolic order. It is the extent to which this internalisation is unsuccessful – that castration is resisted – that neurosis will occur in later life (psychosis remains an even more difficult problem as the psychotic refuses even to recognise the fact of difference – thus refusing any entry into the symbolic).

The analytic situation can now be understood as the attempt to re-orientate the subject in language – to ensure his full access to the symbolic and to desire. The techniques of analysis (the attention to slips, free association, jokes, dreams) are simply an elaborate working on language and the refusal of the analyst to enter into any normal contact with his patient is simply an attempt to avoid the snares of the imaginary in which the other appears as the same and to allow the patient to use the analyst as the big Other around which he can reorganise those moments of primal repression associated with the recognition of the phallus. The key moments of this access to the symbolic can be understood in terms of Freud's concepts of *introjection* and *projection* and of the *ego ideal* and the *ideal ego*. For the final stages of the child's journey towards a sexed subject are marked by the introjection of the forces that create the subject, the ego ideal, and at the same time the conscious mind remains turned towards the imaginary world of projection in which the other is seen as the same and this sameness is in terms of the imaginary ideal ego – the complete self mastery in which the movement of the symbolic would be reduced to the endless narcissistic identification of the mirror image.

Finally, we should like to note a few points on which we have reservations about Metz's use of psychoanalytic concepts. 13

First his resort to Klein's theory of object relations as at least partly equivalent to Lacan's imaginary field. While it is true, as Metz says, that Lacan 'skirts' certain Kleinian themes, it should be emphasised that, particularly in his more recent writings, Lacan has been concerned to stress the predominance of desire, and hence of the Other, over the imaginary itself, which, given Klein's complete neglect of these themes, makes the identification problematic to say the least. Somewhat similarly, too much credence seems to be given to phenomenological film criticism as providing a correct description within the limitations of the imaginary field.

Second, his insistence that, although it is describable in infinite detail and infinitely interpretable, there is a manifest content of the film, a perceptual signified which is the fixed starting point for analysis. This is justified by suggesting that the same is true of the manifest content of the dream, including even the obscurities in it about which the dreamer can only express his doubt. But these doubts in the narration of the dream are not just more signifiers to set beside the clear descriptions, they are the points at which unconscious desire breaks through the narration, at which it, not I, speaks. The fact that with a film there is the celluloid to refer back to, that one need not rely, as with the dream, on an unverifiable memory, does not fundamentally alter the fact that the point of a description of a film is not to establish a fixed manifest film content, but to bring out a set of flaws in the description that will serve as the starting-points for analysis. Metz's notion of a manifest film content could easily lead to a film criticism that consists just of description and interpretation, to a recuperation of psychoanalysis by hermeneutics.

Third, we would re-emphasise Thierry Kuntzel's comments discussed by Metz in note 32. The status of the look itself as the absent object of the scopic drive, absent cause of desire in the scopic domain, examined by Lacan in *Le Séminaire* tome XI, implies that the emprise of perversion, and even of fetishism *stricto sensu*, extends to the areas Metz examines in his Sections III and IV as well as V, and cannot be restricted to the machinery of the cinema and the bar constituted by the edge of the screen. For one instance of this wider fetishism, see Stephen Heath: 'Lessons from Brecht,' *Screen* v 15 n 2, Summer 1974.

The Imaginary Signifier

Christian Metz

I The imaginary and the 'good object' in the cinema and in the theory of the cinema

Reduced to its most fundamental approach, any psychoanalytic reflection might be defined in Lacanian terms as an attempt to disengage the cinema-object from the imaginary and to win it for the symbolic, in the hope of extending the latter by a new province:^{1*} an enterprise of displacement, a territorial enterprise, a symbolising advance; that is to say, in the field of films as in other fields, the psychoanalytic itinerary is *from the outset a semio-logical one*, even (above all) if in comparison with the discourse of a more classical semiology it shifts from attention to the *énoncé* to concern for the *énonciation*.²

* Editor's and translator's notes are given in square brackets, author's own notes without brackets.

1. [The symbolic, the imaginary and the real: For these key terms in Lacan's reading of Freud, see the 'Presentation', p 11; also the entries 'Imaginary' and 'Symbolic' in Jean Laplanche and J-B Pontalis: *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, Hogarth Press, London 1973 (this dictionary can usefully be consulted for all the psychoanalytic terminology to be found in this and other articles in this number of *Screen*).]
2. [*Énoncé* and *énonciation*: Both these terms can be translated as 'utterance', but whereas the first signifies what is uttered, the second signifies the act of uttering. The distinction here (perhaps best captured in English by that between 'statement' and 'speech act') is not that between *langue* and *parole*, since, first, every *énoncé* is a piece of *parole*, and, second, consideration of *énonciation* involves not only the social and psychological, ie non-linguistic context of *énoncés*, but also features of *langue* itself, ways the latter structures the possibilities of *énonciation*. The most obvious of these linguistic features of *énonciation* are the symbol-indexes – personal pronouns, tenses, anaphores (see Emile Benveniste, *Prob-*

A superficial look or a ritual eagerness to detect 'changes' as often as possible will perhaps see a surrender or a new direction where, more simply – less simply, of course – I am accepting the temptation (the attempt) to drive a little deeper the approach of knowledge itself, which constantly symbolises new fragments of the 'real' in order to annex them to 'reality'. – 'There are formulae that are not imagined. For a time, at least, they range themselves with the real' (Jacques Lacan: 'Radiophonie,' *Scilicet* nn 2/3, 1970, p 75). For a time, at least: let us therefore attempt to imagine some of them.

It has very often, and rightly, been said that the cinema is a technique of the imaginary. A technique, on the other hand, which is peculiar to a historical epoch (that of capitalism) and a state of society, so-called industrial civilisation.

A technique of the imaginary, but in two senses. In the ordinary sense of the word, because most films consist of fictional narratives and because all films depend even for their signifier on the primary imaginary of photography and phonography. In the Lacanian sense, too, in which the imaginary, opposed to the symbolic but constantly imbricated with it, designates the basic lure of the ego, the definitive imprint of a *before* the Oedipus complex (which also continues after it), the durable mark of the mirror which alienates man in his own reflection and makes him the double of his double, the subterranean persistence of the exclusive relation to the mother, desire³ as a pure effect of lack and endless pursuit, the initial core of the unconscious (primal repression). All this is undoubtedly reactivated by the actions of that *other mirror*, the cinema screen, in this respect a veritable psychical substitute, a prosthesis for our primally dislocated limbs. But our difficulty – the same one as everywhere else – will be that of grasping in any detail the intimately ramifying articulation of this imaginary with the feats of the signifier, with the semiotic imprint of the Law (here, the cinematic codes) which also marks the unconscious, and thereby man's productions, including films.

At work in these films, the symbolic is no less so in the proposals of anyone who discusses them, and hence in the article I

lems of General Linguistics, University of Miami Press, Coral Gables, Florida 1971, Part V). The relation between *énonciation* and *énoncé* is the relation between the speaker, his context and what he says; that is, the question of the subject's place in language. In poetics, the relation involves the classic problems of intention, of author/narrator/narrative relations. See also footnote 13.]

3. [Desire: French *désir* translates Freud's *Wunsch*, in English usually (eg in the *Standard Edition*) given as 'wish'. It has been translated here throughout as 'desire', because the syntactic properties of the latter correspond more closely to those of the French term, but also because the Freudian concept is much less discrete than the English term 'wish' suggests. See also the 'Presentation', pp 8-10.]

16 I am just beginning. This certainly does not mean that the symbolic is enough to produce a knowledge (see Lacan: 'Sur la théorie du symbolisme d'Ernest Jones,' *Ecrits*, Editions du Seuil, Paris 1966, p 711), since the uninterpreted dream, the fantasy, the symptom are all symbolic operations. Nevertheless, it is in its wake that we can find hope for a little more knowledge, it is one of its avatars that introduces 'understanding', whereas the imaginary is the site of an insurpassable opacity, almost by definition. Thus as a beginning it is absolutely essential to tear the symbolic from its own imaginary and to return it to it as a look. To tear it from it, but not completely, or at least not in the sense of ignoring it and fleeing from it (fearing it): the imaginary is also what has to be *rediscovered* precisely in order to avoid being swallowed up by it: a never ending task. If I have only been able to manage here a small part of this task (in the cinematic field), I shall by no means be displeased.

For the problem of the cinema is always reduplicated as a problem of the theory of the cinema and we can only extract knowledge from what we are (what we are as persons, what we are as culture and society). As in political struggles, our only weapons are those of the adversary, as in anthropology, our only source is the native, as in the analytical cure, our only knowledge is that of the analysand, who is also (current French usage tells us so) the analyser (*analysant*). The posture which inaugurates knowledge is defined by a *backward turn* and by it alone – a backward turn is the movement common to my three examples, which are more than examples. If the effort of science is constantly threatened by a relapse into the very thing against which it is constituted, that is because it is constituted as much *in* it as *against* it, and that the two prepositions are here in some sense synonymous (in a very similar way, the neurotic defences set to work against anxiety themselves become anxiogenic because they originate in anxiety). The work of the symbolic, in the theoretician who would delimit the share of the imaginary and that of the symbolic in the cinema, is always in danger of being swallowed up in the very imaginary which is sustained by the cinema, which makes the film likeable, and which is thus the instigation for the theoretician's very existence (= the 'desire to study the cinema', to use more ordinary terms): to sum up, the objective conditions that give rise to the theory of the cinema are one and the same as those that make that theory precarious and permanently threaten it with sliding into its opposite, in which the *discourse of the object* (the native discourse of the cinematic institution) insidiously comes to occupy the place of *discourse about the object*.

This is the risk that has to be run, there is no choice; anyone who does not run it has already fallen victim to it: like certain cinema journalists, he gossips about films in order to *prolong* their effective and social incidence, their imaginary, that is, perfectly

In an article in *Communications* n 23, May 1975, 'Le film de fiction et son spectateur', I attempt to show that the cinema spectator has veritable 'object relations' with films. The aim of my contribution to *Hommage à Emile Benveniste* was to specify (following Jean-Louis Baudry, but obliquely with respect to his remarkable analyses in 'Cinéma: effets idéologiques produits par l'appareil de base,' *Cinéthique* nn 7/8, 1970, pp 1-8, translated as 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus', *Film Quarterly* vol XXVIII n 2, Winter 1974-5, pp 39-47, and in 'Le dispositif', *Communications* n 23 op cit) what the voyeurism of the spectator had to do with the primordial experience of the mirror, and also with the primal scene (with a unilateral voyeurism without exhibitionism on the part of the object looked at).

This is thus the moment to recall certain given facts which will be very important for the rest of this study, facts that pre-exist my intervention and belong to the history of the psychoanalytic movement. The very notion of an 'object relation' – a fantasy relation, quite distinct from real relations to real objects and yet contributing to their construction – constitutes one of Melanie Klein's unique contributions to the Freudian field, and is inscribed entirely within what was to become for Lacan the dimension of the imaginary. Lacan's discourse in fact 'skirts' certain Kleinian themes without coinciding with them (= partial objects, role of the breast, importance of the oral stage, persecution fantasies of fragmentation, depressive positions of loss, etc), but this only on the side of the imaginary. The main grounds for Lacan's criticism of Melanie Klein will also be familiar: her reduction of the psyche to only one of its axes, the imaginary, the absence of a theory of the symbolic, 'failing even to glimpse the category of the signifier' ('La direction de la cure', *Ecrits*, op cit, p 637). – On the other hand, the experience of the mirror as it is described by Lacan⁴ is essentially situated on the side of the imaginary (= formation of the ego by identification with a phantom, an image), even if the mirror also makes possible a first access to the symbolic by the mediation of the mother holding the child to the glass whose reflection, functioning here as the big Other,⁵ necessarily

4. [Lacan's conception of the mirror phase is discussed in more detail in Section III 2 below. See Laplanche and Pontalis, op cit, and Jacques Lacan: 'The Mirror Phase', *New Left Review* n 51, September-October 1968, pp 71-7.]

5. [The big Other: The mirror phase establishes a dual relation between the child and its mirror image, internalised as the ego; this produces the register of what Lacan calls the imaginary, which constitutes a moment of any relation to an other (with a small o) or object later in life. However, the imaginary relation of ego and other is immediately marked by and subordinated to the symbolic

18 appears in the field of the mirror alongside that of the child.

To sum up, what I have analysed, or attempted to analyse, in my first two Freudian inspired studies (written several months before this one) turns out, without my having precisely intended it, to be already established on one of the flanks of the ridge-line, that of the imaginary: cinematic fiction as a semi-oneiric instance, in one of these articles, and in the other, the spectator-screen relationship as a mirror identification. That is why I should now like to approach my object from its symbolic flank, or rather along the ridge-line itself. My dream today is to speak of the cinematic dream in terms of a code: of the code of this dream.

For the spectator, the film can on occasion be a 'bad object':⁶ then we have *filmic unpleasure*, which I deal with elsewhere (in my article in *Communications* n 23 op cit) and which defines the relation of certain spectators to certain films, or of certain groups of spectators to certain groups of films. Nevertheless, the 'good object' relation is more basic from the standpoint of a socio-historical critique of the cinema, for it is this relation and by no means the opposite one (which thus appears as a local failure of the former) that constitutes the aim of the cinematic institution and that the latter is constantly attempting to maintain or re-establish.

Let me insist once again, the cinematic institution is not just the

order through the set of introjections of the ego that culminate in the ego ideal, and the relativisation of any other or object with respect to a primordially lost object which a real object or other can only represent metonymically. Ego and other are then subordinated to an order that is always elsewhere, more radically Other than any other and hence unconscious, *the* unconscious. The absolute character of this otherness is marked in Lacan's writings by the use of an initial capital. The establishment of this subordination culminates in the resolution of the Œdipus complex, but it begins immediately after, or even during, the mirror phase itself, in the presence of a third party (the mother) in the mirror with the child's image, and in the *fort-da* game, the child's discovery through repetition of presence and absence.]

6. [In Melanie Klein's account of the pre-Œdipal development of the child, its earliest drives, particularly the oral drives associated with feeding and the breast, are primordially ambivalent, both loving and destructive; in one of the earliest phases of development, called the 'paranoid-schizoid position' (position - *Einstellung* - because these phases structure unconscious fantasy and can therefore recur at any age), the child's weak ego handles this ambivalence by splitting the object (eg the breast) into a good and a bad object, projecting its own love and hate on to its two aspects (gratifying, frustrating); at a later phase, the 'depressive position', the two objects are re-united, the ego being reconciled to the ambivalence by inhibition of the aggression and reparation (*Wiedergutmachung*) of the object.]

cinema industry (which works to fill cinemas, not to empty them), 19
it is also the mental machinery – another industry – which spectators ‘accustomed to the cinema’ have internalised historically and which has adapted them to the consumption of films. (The institution is outside us and inside us, indistinctly collective and intimate, sociological and psychoanalytic, just as the general prohibition of incest has as its individual corollary the Œdipus complex, castration or perhaps in other states of society different psychical configurations but ones which still *imprint* the institution in us in their own way.) The second machine, ie the social regulation of the spectator’s metapsychology, like the first, has as its function to set up good object relations with films if at all possible; here too the ‘bad film’ is a failure of the institution: the cinema is attended out of desire, not reluctance, in the hope that the film will please, not that it will displease. Thus filmic pleasure and filmic unpleasure, although they correspond to the two imaginary objects shaped by the persecutory splitting described by Melanie Klein, are not in my view arranged in positions of antithetic symmetry, since the institution as a whole has filmic pleasure alone as its aim.

In a social system in which the spectator is not forced physically to go to the cinema but in which it is still important that he should go so that the money he pays for his admission makes it possible to shoot other films and thus ensures the auto-reproduction of the institution – and it is the specific characteristic of every true institution that it takes charge of the mechanisms of its own perpetuation – there is no other solution than to set up arrangements whose aim and effect is to give the spectator the ‘spontaneous’ desire to visit the cinema and pay for his ticket. The outer machine (the cinema as industry) and the inner machine (the spectator’s psychology) are not just metaphorically related, the latter a facsimile of the former, ‘internalising’ it as a reversed mould, a receptive hollow of identical form, but also metonymically related as complementary segments: the ‘desire to go to the cinema’ is a kind of reflection shaped by the film industry, but it is also a real link in the chain of the overall mechanism of that industry. It occupies one of the essential positions in the circulation of money, the turnover of capital without which films could no longer be made: a privileged position since it intervenes just after the ‘outward’ movement (which includes the financial investment in cinematic undertakings, the material manufacture of the films, their distribution, their hire to the cinemas) and inaugurates the circuit of return which brings the money back, if possible with an increase, from the pockets of the individual spectators eventually to those of the production companies or the banks supporting them, thus giving the go-ahead for new films to be made. In this way, the libidinal economy (filmic pleasure in its historically constituted form) reveals its ‘correspondence’ with

20 the political economy (the current cinema as a commercial enterprise), and it is, moreover – as the very existence of ‘market research’ shows – one of the specific elements of that economy: this is what is euphemistically translated by the term ‘*motivation*’ in socio-psychological surveys directly devoted to sales.

If I am concerned to define the cinematic institution as a wider instance than the cinema industry (or than the ambiguous commonplace notion of the ‘commercial cinema’) it is because of this *dual kinship* – mould and segment, facsimile and component – between the psychology of the spectator (which is only apparently ‘individual’; as everywhere else, only its most minute variations can be described as such) and the financial mechanisms of the cinema. My insistence on this point may be irritating, but imagine what would occur in the absence of such a state of affairs: we should have to suppose (no less) the existence of some special police force or some statutory arrangement of ‘*a posteriori*’ inspection (= a stamp in one’s identity card on admission to a cinema) to force people to go to the cinema: a piece of science fiction I have resorted to here simply for its absurdity, but one which does at least have the paradoxically dual advantage that it both corresponds to a situation which is not quite without real examples of an attenuated and localised kind (such as those political regimes in which certain direct propaganda films are practically ‘obligatory’ for members of the movement or of the official youth organisations), and yet clearly designates a modality of *regular* cinema attendance very different from that on which the institution depends in the vast majority of cases, ie in what one would (for that very reason) call its ‘normal’ forms. Here I am touching on political analysis, and the difference there is between a cinema-institution which would be of a fascist type (and has hardly ever existed on a broad scale, even in regimes which might have made a greater call on it) and a cinema-institution which is capitalist and liberal in inspiration, and is broadly dominant almost everywhere, even in countries otherwise more or less socialist.

In the register of the imaginary (= Klein’s object relation), the institution thus depends on the good object, although it may happen that it manufactures bad ones. At this point we perhaps glimpse the existence within the cinema of a *third machine* which I have so far only mentioned (p 16) and even then not named. I shall now leave the industry and the spectator to consider the *cinematic writer* (critic, historian, theoretician, etc), and I am struck by the extreme concern he often reveals – a concern which gives him an odd resemblance to producer and consumer – to maintain a good object relation with as many films as possible, and at any rate with the cinema as such.

This proposition will immediately 'arouse' a host of counter-examples, but I shall not stop for them since I accept them entirely. Let me recall one of them at least, chosen at random: the representatives of the French 'new wave', when they had not yet made any films and were working as critics for *Cahiers du cinéma*, based a broad sector of their theory on the denunciation of a certain type of film, the 'French quality' film; this attack was no pretence, it went much further than a mere disagreement at the intellectual level, it conveyed a real and profound antipathy for the films denounced: it constituted them as bad objects, for the denouncers themselves first of all, then for the audience that attached itself to them and a little later guaranteed the success of their films (thus restoring a 'good' cinema). Besides, cinematic literature, taken as a whole, is not sparing in passages where a film, a film-maker, a genre, some general aspect of the cinema itself, are taken briskly to task. Settling accounts is as frequent, probably more so and certainly rougher, in cinema criticism as it is in literary criticism, for example.

It might be enough, and it would not be false, to say that the very violence of these reactions confirms the broadly projective character of the relation the cinema writer often maintains to his 'object' (very aptly named here). But it is essential to go further. What I should like to emphasise is the fact that despite these hostilities which come to be 'imprinted' in cinematic writings and are neither uncommon nor simulated, there is a more fundamental and opposite tendency in cinema writers, an intention to establish, maintain or re-establish the cinema (or films) in the position of good object. Thus cinema criticism is imaginary in both its two main movements, linked together by the bond of a true reaction formation: in the persecutory aspects of blind polemic, in the great depressive plunge in which the cinema-object is restored, repaired, protected.

It is very often to exalt a certain cinema that another has been violently attacked: the oscillation between 'good' and 'bad', the immediacy of the restoration mechanism, then appear in all their clarity.

Another case, and just as frequent a one, is that of conceptions of the cinema which aim to be theoretical and general but in fact consist of justifying a given type of films that one has first liked, and rationalising this liking after the event. These 'theories' are often author aesthetics (aesthetics of taste); they may contain insights of considerable theoretical importance, but the writer's posture is not theoretical: the *énoncé* is sometimes scientific, the *énonciation* never. A rather similar phenomenon, varying in the extent to which it is caricatural, and often very ingenious, can be observed in certain young cinephiles who substantially change their basic opinion of the cinema, sometimes in an exuberant or dramatic way, after each film they have seen which has strongly attracted

22 them: the new theorisation is cut each time to the precise measure of this unique and delicious film, and yet it is indispensable that it be sincerely experienced as 'general' to prolong and amplify, to *sanction* the vivid momentary pleasure they obtained on seeing the film: the id does not bring its own super-ego with it,⁷ it is not enough to be happy, or rather one cannot be perfectly happy, unless one is sure one has a right to be happy. (In the same way some men can only fully live their present love by projecting it into a mental temporality and persuading themselves that it will last throughout their lives: the contradiction of experience, the precise renewal of the same inflation vis-à-vis the next love are incapable of shaking the disposition they carry with them: for its real mechanism is almost the diametrical opposite of its apparent result: far from the strength of their love guaranteeing it a real future, the psychical representation of that future is the prior condition for the establishment of their full amorous potency in the present; the institution of marriage answers to this need and reinforces it.) – To return to the cinema, the rationalisation of a taste into a theory in its numerous and commonplace forms obeys an objective law which hardly varies in its broad lines. It could be described in Lacanian terms as a slight wavering between the functions of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real; in Kleinian terms as a slight overflow of the unconscious fantasies; in Freudian terms as a slight inadequacy of secondarisation.⁸ The real object (here the film *which has pleased*) and the truly theoretical discourse by which it might have been symbolised have been more or less confused with the imaginary object (= the film *such as it has pleased*, ie something which owes a great deal to its spectator's own fantasy) and the virtues of the latter have been conferred

7. [Ego, super-ego and id: From around 1920, Freud distinguished three psychic instances, the id or instinctual pole of the personality, the ego, representing the interests of the total personality and cathected (see footnote 12 below) with narcissistic libido, and the super-ego, corresponding roughly to the earlier concept of the ego ideal, a critical instance resulting from the internalisation of parental demands and prohibitions. This second topography does not contradict the earlier division between unconscious, pre-conscious and conscious, but nor do its divisions correspond to those of the first topography; in particular, more than the id is unconscious.]

8. [Primary process and secondary process: Freud distinguished two modes of functioning of the psychical apparatus, an unconscious primary process, dominated by the pleasure principle, ie allowing a free flow of psychical energy from representation to representation and fully recathecting (see n 12 below) desired representations, and a preconscious and conscious secondary process, dominated by the reality principle, in which psychical energy is bound, flowing only in a controlled fashion, with representations more stably cathected, satisfaction postponed, allowing rational thought and the testing of the various possible ways to satisfaction. 'Secondarisation' is the binding process that the making conscious of a representation or desire involves.]

on the former by projection. Thus a simultaneously internal and external love object is constituted, at once comforted by a justificatory theory which only overlaps with it (occasionally even silently ignoring it) the better to surround and protect it, according to the cocoon principle. The general discourse is a kind of advanced structure of the phobic (and also counter-phobic) type, a proleptic reparation of any harm which might come to the object, a depressive procedure occasionally breached by persecutory returns, an unconscious protection against a possible change in the taste of the lover himself, a defence more or less intermingled with pre-emptive counter-attack. To adopt the outward marks of theoretical discourse is to occupy a strip of territory *around* the adored film, all that really counts, in order to bar all the roads by which it might be attacked. The cinematic rationaliser, locking himself up in his system, is gripped by a kind of siege psychosis; he protects the film, but also, within the shelter of the ramparts of theory, organises his dual relationship with it for a more integral pleasure (*jouissance*).⁹ The traits of the symbolic are convoked since the texture of the discourse is often sufficiently close, but they are returned to the imaginary and work to its advantage alone. The question never posed is precisely the one which would overthrow the whole construction: 'Why did I like this film (I rather than another, this film rather than another)?' A true theory is recognisable among other things by the fact that it would see a problem here, whereas many cinematic conceptions depend on the contrary on the redoubtable effectivity of the fact itself, and hence on a silence established with respect to it: these are *deproblematISATION* techniques and to that extent the exact opposite of the procedures of knowledge, even when they contain some authentically scientific break-throughs.

This 'sanctioning construction' built on to a film and a taste is not the only manifestation of the powers of the imaginary in cinematic writings. There are several others, some of which are so striking that I am amazed not to have thought of them sooner, at least in this light (it would be better were I less amazed: I am myself a victim of what I am criticising). — Consider cinematic historians: they very often act — and this is not to be regretted, for without this cast of mind we should have no cinematic documentation — as real cinema archivists, the keepers of an imaginary archive, in the sense in which Malraux's *Museum* was imaginary. Their wish is to *save* as many films as possible; not *qua* copies, *qua* celluloid, but the social memory of those films and hence a by no means unfavourable image of them. The history of the cinema often presents the appearance of an easy-going theodicy, a

9. [*Jouissance*: The French term means both 'orgasm' and simple 'enjoyment' or 'pleasure'. It has been translated as seemed best from the context, but the ambiguity should always be borne in mind.]

24 vast Last Judgement in which indulgence will be the rule. Its real aim is to annex to the category of the 'interesting' (a subtly valorising variant of that of the 'notable' as defined by Roland Barthes in 'L'effet de réel,' *Communications* n 11, 1968, special number on 'Le vraisemblable', p 85), the maximum number of bands. To this end various and sometimes contradictory criteria are called on, in a disparate and gossipy gathering: one film is 'retained' for its aesthetic value, another as a sociological document, a third as a typical example of the bad films of a period, a fourth is the minor work of a major film-maker, a fifth the major work of a minor film-maker, a further one owes its inscription in the catalogue to its place in a component chronology (it is the first film shot with a certain type of lens, or else the last film made in Tsarist Russia): one is reminded of the similarly heteroclitic justifications unfailingly offered by Proust's Françoise for her choice of each day's menus for the meals at Combray: 'A brill, because the fishwoman had guaranteed its freshness; a turkey, because she had seen a beauty in the market at Roussainville-le-Pin; cartoons with marrow, because she had never done them for us in that way before; a roast leg of mutton, because the fresh air made one hungry and there would be plenty of time for it to "settle down" in the seven hours before dinner; spinach by way of a change; apricots, because they were still hard to get . . . etc' (*Remembrance of Things Past*, Vol I, *Swann's Way*, Part One, translated by C K Scott Moncrieff, London 1941, pp 93-4). The true function of this *accumulation of criteria* practised by many historians of the cinema is to mention as many films as possible (hence the usefulness of their works), and to this end to multiply as often as can be the number of points of view from which a film may be felt to be 'good' in one respect or another.

Like critics, like historians, but in slightly different ways, theoreticians often help to maintain the cinema in the imaginary enclosure of a pure love. Thus it is rather rare for the *properties* of cinematic language to be presented as such, ie precisely as properties, which would be to appeal before all else to an existential judgement (= 'there is a type of montage called accelerated montage') and to an inclusive judgement (= 'the sequence shot is one of the possibilities of the cinema'): to those two forms of judgement whose inaugural importance for all thought of a rational and logical kind was demonstrated by Freud along with their affective roots ('Negation', 1925, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed James Strachey, 24 volumes, London 1953-66, Vol XIX, pp 235-9). Much more frequently, the properties are offered to us straightaway as 'resources', 'riches', 'means of expression', and this vocabulary insinuates into the apparently analytic statement the invisible and permanent thread of a very different procedure which is really a *plea*, a claim for legitimacy and an appeal for recognition (even

before cognition), a declaration of rivalry or candidature with respect to the older, more accepted arts. These movements were more clearly apparent in the theoreticians of the earliest days of the cinema, sometimes quite explicitly so. 25

What is it in the end that I want to say about these writings whose approach is that of a love? Certainly not that their authors are 'wrong' in every point, or that what they say is always false. That is not the point. Wishing to get rid of the affective gets one nowhere, nor would it get this article anywhere. Even less is the point to forget that these *assertive affects* are the reversed consequence of the opposite cultural prejudice, still alive today, that sees in the cinema a low-level distraction (and which thus starts by thinking in levels). In a history of contemporary culture the concern for the good object which I have tried to bring out can only be understood in relation to the bad-object status that society initially conferred on the cinema and to which it still confines it to some extent. In doing so it has considerably set back the possibility of a knowledge of the cinematic fact: directly (by neglect or disdain), but also by reaction (which concerns me here), by exacerbating in those concerned with the cinema the persistent drama of an *adherence* that sometimes becomes a kind of entanglement.

Discourse about the cinema is too often part of the institution, whereas it should be studying it and believes or pretends that it is doing so. It is, as I have said, its third machine: after the one that manufactures the films, and the one that consumes them, the one that *vaunts* them, that valorises the product. Often, by unexpected paths, unperceived by those who have quite unintentionally taken them, paths which manifest the radical exteriority of effects to conscious intentions, writings on film become another form of cinema advertising and at the same time a linguistic appendage of the institution itself. Like those alienated sociologists who unknowingly repeat the pronouncements of their society, it extends the object, it *idealises* it instead of turning back on to it, it makes explicit the film's inaudible murmuring to us of 'Love me': a mirror reduplication of the film's own ideological inspiration, already based on the mirror identification of the spectator with the camera (or secondarily with the characters, if any).

Discourse about the cinema then becomes a dream: an uninterpreted dream. This is what constitutes its symptomatic value; it has already said everything. But it is also what makes it obligatory to turn it inside out like a glove, to return it like the gauntlet on accepting a challenge; it does not know what it is saying. Knowledge of the cinema is obtained via a *reprise* of the native discourse, in two senses of the word: taking it into consideration and re-establishing it.

26 The turning I am discussing is never anything but a return. In the cinema, too, the product presents us with a reversed image of the production, as it does in the materialist conception of ideologies, or in neurotic rationalisations, as in the *camera obscura* which, with its 180-degree-turned optical image, is the very starting-point of cinematic technique. The effort towards knowing is necessarily sadistic insofar as it can only grasp its object against the grain, re-ascend the slopes of the institution (whereas the latter is designed for one to 'follow' them, to descend them), like the interpretation that goes back along the path of the dream work,¹⁰ acting by nature in the manner of a counter-current.

To be a theoretician of the cinema, one should ideally no longer love the cinema and yet still love it: have loved it a lot and only have detached oneself from it by taking it up again from the other end, taking it as the target for the very same scopic drive¹¹ which had made one love it. Have broken with it, as certain relationships are broken, not in order to move on to something else, but in order to return to it at the next bend in the spiral. Carry the institution inside one still so that it is in a place accessible to self-analysis, but carry it there as a distinct instance which does not over-infiltrate the rest of the ego with the thousand paralysing bonds of a tender unconditionality. Not have forgotten what the cinephile one used to be was like, in all the details of his affective inflections, in the three dimensions of his living being, and yet no longer be invaded by him: not have lost sight of him, but be keeping an eye on him. Finally, be him and not be him, since all in all these are the two conditions on which one can speak of him.

This balance may seem a somewhat acrobatic one. It is and it

10. [Dream work: The manifest content of the dream is the product of the dream work which transforms (and distorts in the interests of censorship) the materials of the dream: dream thoughts, day's residues and bodily stimuli. Analysis works backwards from the analysand's account of his manifest dream to the materials of the dream. The main mechanism of the dream work are condensation (accumulation of a number of dream thoughts, etc, into a single manifest representation), displacement (shift of cathexis – see footnote 12 – from one representation to an associated one, or replacement of the former by the latter), considerations of representability (translation of abstract thoughts into concrete images) and secondary revision (assembly of the result of the other three mechanisms into a relatively coherent and comprehensible whole).]
11. [Freud's term *Trieb*, French *pulsion*, is usually translated into English (eg in the *Standard Edition*) as 'instinct'. Freud distinguished between *Instinkt*, meaning an inherited pattern of behaviour, and *Trieb*, a psychical force or motor relatively independent of its aim and object, representing a somatic excitation or bodily need (see Section IV below). Throughout this article, *pulsion* has been translated as 'drive' in order to preserve these distinctions, except for one or two occasions on which the adjectival form *pulsionnel* has been translated as 'instinctual'.]

is not. Of course no one can be sure to attain it perfectly, everyone is in danger of slipping off on one side or the other. And yet, in principle, considering the very possibility of *maintaining* such a position, it is not true that it is so very acrobatic, or rather it is no more so than the other (really very similar) mental postures required for tasks more ordinarily evoked. This is forgotten because it is not customary (it is one of the great taboos of scientism, one of its terrors) to mention the metapsychological preconditions of scientific work. But for anyone who is prepared to consider them, the species of deliberate ambivalence I am trying to describe, this special variety of splitting, at once salutary and fragile, this minimum of flexibility in one's relations to oneself, this economic conversion by which a strong object cathexis¹² (here attraction to the cinema), initially molar and opaque, subsequently undergoes an instinctual vicissitude that bifidates it and arranges it like a pair of pliers, one pincher (voyeuristic sadism sublimated into epistemophilia) coming to meet the other in which the original imaginary of the dual effusion with the object is retained as a (living, surviving) witness – in short, this itinerary and the present configuration that results from it are not in the end especially exceptional or contorted (even if for some 'scientists' they are among those things that must not be stated). It is itineraries and economies of the same kind (tendentially, still, never as a finished result) that also define the objective conditions of the subjective possibility of the ethnologist's work, or of that of the analysand in the cure, ultimately of that of all work of *interpretance* in the semiotic and Peircean sense of the word (= translation from one system into another). What really is uncommon is not the thing itself, but simply the idea that cinematic studies are not in themselves blessed with any special privilege of exemption, any *magical extra-territoriality*, any adolescent immunity from the common requirements of knowledge and symbolic cathexis which are (sometimes) more clearly perceived in other fields.

II The Investigator's Imaginary

I ask myself what in fact is the object of this article. What is the *driving uncertainty* without which I should not have the desire to write it, and thus would not be writing it? What is my imaginary at this moment? What is it that I am trying, even without illusions, to bring to a conclusion?

12. [Cathexis: The term adopted in English (eg the *Standard Edition*) to translate Freud's *Besetzung*, in French usually (as here) *investissement*, meaning the attachment of psychical energy deriving from the drives to a representation or object.]

28 It seems to me that it is a *question*, in the material sense of the word – a sentence terminating in a question mark – and that, as in dreams, it is inscribed right there in front of me, armed from head to toe. I shall unfold it here, with, of course, that slightly obsessional coefficient which is party to any aspiration to rigour.

So let me spell it out: 'What contribution can Freudian psychoanalysis make to the study of the cinematic signifier?'

This is, in other words, the manifest content of my dream, and its interpretation will (I hope) constitute my article. I can already see three acute points, three nodal points in it. Let me examine them separately (*The Interpretation of Dreams* invites us to do so, as does the minimal necessity of having a 'plan'), and associate freely from each of them. They are the words 'contribution', 'Freudian psychoanalysis' and above all 'cinematic signifier'.

II.1 Psychoanalysis, linguistics, history

'Contribution', then, first of all: this term tells me that psychoanalysis cannot be the only discipline concerned in the study of the cinematic signifier, and that its offering has to be articulated with others. To begin with, and fairly directly, with that of classical semiology, ie of the linguistic inspiration, my main guide in my earliest filmic investigations and today in those of several others. – Why 'directly'? Because linguistics and psychoanalysis are both sciences of the symbolic and are even, come to think of it, the only two sciences whose immediate and sole object is the fact of signification as such (obviously all sciences are concerned with it, but never so frontally or exclusively). To be slightly cavalier, linguistics – together with its close relations, notably modern symbolic logic – can be regarded as taking for its share the exploration of the secondary process, and psychoanalysis that of the primary process:¹³ that is to say, between them they cover the whole field of the *signification-fact* taken in itself. Linguistics and psychoanalysis are the two main 'sources' of semiology, the only disciplines that are semiotic through and through.

That is why both in turn have to be set within the horizon of a *third perspective*, which is as it were their common and permanent background: the direct study of societies, historical criticism, the examination of infrastructures. This time the junc-

13. If I see this division as a deliberate simplification (but perhaps that is precisely why it is useful), this is for various reasons, two of which are more important than the rest: (i) psychoanalysis has not introduced only the idea of the primary process, but also the very distinction between the primary and the secondary (hence it has 're-founded' the secondary); (ii) inversely, certain linguists, such as Emile Benveniste, for example, in his studies of the personal pronouns, go beyond the study of the pure '*énoncé*' and through their reflections on the *énonciation* enter on a road which leads closer to the 'primary', to the constitution of the subject, etc.

tion is much less easy (if the other one can be described as easy), 29
for the signifier has its own laws (primary and secondary), and so
does political economy. Even technically, if one thinks of the daily
work of the investigator, of his reading, his documentation, etc.,
the 'dual competence' which was not impossible until recently
has now become precarious: thus in the case of the cinema, where
is the semiotician who could seriously claim, given his education
and his specialised conceptual tools, to be able to explain the role
of capitalist monopolies in the film industry in as pertinent and
rigorous a way as economists like Henri Mercillon and his disciples
have? In cinematic studies as in others, semiology (or semiologies)
cannot replace the various disciplines that discuss the social fact
itself (the source of all symbolism), with its laws that determine
those of the symbolic without being identical with them: sociology,
anthropology, history, political economy, demography, etc. It
cannot replace them, nor must it repeat them (danger of ritual
repetition or 'reductionism'). It must take them into account,
move forward on its own front (it too is materialist in its own
way) and mark the anchorage points in all the cases in which the
state of research already makes this possible (for example the
spectator's psychism as a historical governor and link in the chain
of the money circuit). In other words, it must be inscribed in
advance, by a kind of epistemological anticipation (but one which
must not become the pretext for a voluntary paralysis), in the
perspective of a true knowledge of man – a perspective still only
present as a dotted line in most of its circuit, and a knowledge,
in the singular, very different from today's 'human sciences', so
often gnawed by scientism and yet necessary, for today is not
tomorrow – of a state of knowing in which the way the develop-
ment of technologies and balances of social forces (society in its
physical state, as it were) finally comes to influence inflections
peculiar to the work of the symbolic such as the order of 'shots'
or the role of 'sound off' in some cinematic sub-code in some
genre of films, for example, would be *known* in all the reality of
the intermediate mechanisms without which only a global inkling
and postulation of causality is possible.

Here I am touching on the famous problem of 'relative auto-
nomies' but not necessarily (although the two things are often
confused) on a simple distinction between infrastructures and
superstructures. For if it is clear that the cinema is an industry,
its modes of financing, the technological development of film stock,
the average income of the spectators (enabling them to go more or
less often to the cinema), the price of seats and many more other
things belong fully to infrastructural studies, it does not follow
that, by some mechanical symmetry, the symbolic (primary or
secondary) is exclusively superstructural in its order. It is partly
so, of course, and even largely so in its most apparent strata, in
its manifest content, in those of its features that are directly

30 related to precise social facts and change when the latter change: eg in linguistics broad sectors of the lexicon (but already much less of phonology or syntax), in psychoanalysis the various historical variants of the Œdipus complex – or perhaps the Œdipus complex itself, which is far from being the whole of psychoanalysis – which are clearly linked to the development of the institution of the family. But signification also has more buried and permanent springs (ones by definition less visible, less striking to the mind) whose validity extends, in our present state of knowledge, to the whole of humanity, ie to man as a biological ‘species’. Not that the symbolic is something ‘natural’, non-social; on the contrary, in its deepest foundations (which are always structures and not ‘facts’), signification is no longer just a consequence of social development, it becomes, along with the infrastructures, a party to the constitution of sociality itself, which in its turn defines the human race. The partial ‘uncoupling’ of the laws of signification from short-term historical developments does not mean a naturalisation of the semiotic (its *psycho-logicalisation*), but on the contrary re-emphasises its radical, as it were definitional, sociality. There is always a moment after the obvious observation that it is man who makes the symbol when it is also clear that the symbol makes man: this is one of the great lessons of psychoanalysis,¹⁴ anthropology,¹⁵ and linguistics.¹⁶

Abstracting from the immense sector in which it is specifically *cultural* (varying in a time scale which is of the same order as that of history), the symbolic is thus not precisely a superstructure. This does not make it an infrastructure,¹⁷ unless one departs from the strict (Marxist) sense of the term, and there is nothing to be gained from such a *mélange*. Rather, in its deeper strata it represents a kind of *juxtastructure*, to use a term which has already been put forward for other phenomena of the same kind, a *juxtastructure* in which are expressed, in the last analysis, certain characteristics of man as an animal (and as an animal different from all other animals, ie as a non-animal too). I shall only recall two well-known examples of these ‘laws’ (of these aspects of ‘The Law’ as Lacan would say) that help underpin all signifiatory work. In linguistics, in all known idioms, double articulation, the paradigm/syntagm opposition, the necessary duplication of the

14. Lacan: ‘The order of the symbol can no longer be conceived as constituted by man, but rather as constituting him,’ ‘Le Séminaire sur “La Lettre Volée”’, *Écrits*, op cit, p 46.

15. Eg Lévi-Strauss: myths think themselves among themselves.

16. See Benveniste’s notion that, in a sense, it is *langue* that ‘contains’ society rather than the reverse (‘Sémiologie de la langue,’ *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, tome II, Gallimard, Paris 1974, p 62).

17. It will be remembered that this is what Stalin said of language, and that Lacan has maliciously recalled it (*Écrits*, op cit, p 496 n 1; New York 1970, p 104 n 4).

cf ‘The Insistence of the Letter,’ in *Structuralism*, ed J Ehrmann,

logical generation of sentences into a categorial component and a transformational component. In psychoanalysis, in all known societies, the prohibition of incest (and yet sexual procreation, as in all the higher animals) along with the inevitable corollary of these two as it were contradictory facts, the very remarkable relationship (whether or no it consists of an Oedipus complex of the classical type) which each human offspring must definitively enter into with respect to its father and its mother (or to a more diffuse world of kin) and thus a variety of major consequences such as repression, the division of the psychical apparatus into several systems which are relatively ignorant of one another, hence the permanent coexistence in human productions (such as films) of two irreducible 'logics', one of which is 'illogical' and opens permanently on to a multiplicity of overdeterminations, etc. 31

To sum up, a combination of linguistic inspiration and psychoanalytic inspiration may lead gradually to a relatively autonomous science of the cinema (= 'semiology of the cinema'), but the latter will deal *simultaneously* with facts which are superstructural and others which are not, without for all that being specifically infrastructural. In both these aspects its relation to truly infrastructural studies (cinematic and general) will remain. It is on these three levels that the symbolic is social (hence it is entirely social). But, like the society which creates it and which it creates, it too has a materiality, a kind of *body*: it is in this almost physical state that it concerns semiology and that the semiologist desires it.

II.2 Freudian psychoanalysis and other psychoanalyses

In the 'formula' occupying my mind at the moment of writing and that I am unwinding as I write, I feel another point of resistance: 'Freudian psychoanalysis' (= 'How can it contribute to the study of the cinematic signifier?'). – Why this word, or rather why these two words? Because as is well known, psychoanalysis is not entirely Freudian, far from it, and the vigorous 'return to Freud' imposed by Lacan has its origin and its necessity in this very situation. But this return has not affected the world psychoanalytic movement as a whole. Even independently of this influence, psychoanalysis and Freudianism are inter-related in a manner varying from region to region (in France psychoanalysis is as a whole more Freudian than it is in the USA, etc), so anyone claiming to make any use of psychoanalysis, as I do at this moment for the cinema, is necessarily called on to say what psychoanalysis he is talking about. There are plenty of examples of 'psychoanalytic' practices, and more or less explicit accompanying theories, in which all that is vital in Freud's discovery, everything that makes it (should make it) an irreversible achievement, a decisive moment in knowledge, is smoothed out, pared down, 'recuperated' as a new variant of ethical psychology or medical psychiatry (humanism

32 and medicine: two great evasions of Freudianism). The most striking example (but far from the only one) is that provided by certain 'American-style' therapeutic doctrines (cf Marc Vernet's article 'Mise en scène = USA — Freud = effets spéciaux' in *Communications* n 23 op cit), solidly installed more or less everywhere, which are in large part techniques for the standardisation or banalisation of character, for avoidance of conflict at any price.

What I shall call psychoanalysis will be the tradition of Freud and its still continuing developments, with original extensions such as those that revolve around the contributions of Melanie Klein in England and Jacques Lacan in France.¹⁸

II.3 Various kinds of psychoanalytic study of the cinema

I now return to my question: in what way can psychoanalysis cast light on the cinematic signifier? — Its third acute point is the word 'signifier': why especially the signifier of films, or in other words, why not their signified?

The fact is that psychoanalytic studies of the cinema are of various kinds (already exemplified or clearly conceivable), some of which are illustrated in one or other of the articles in *Communications* n 23 cited above. We should try to avoid confusing them (try to 'put them into place') in order to be able to designate more precisely the one I have in view myself.

First of all there is the *nosographic* approach. It would treat films as symptoms or as secondary manifestations that have been partially symptomatised, from which it is possible to 'ascend' to the neurosis of the film-maker (or the script-writer, etc). An undertaking very much in the classificatory spirit of medicine, even if in a moderate form: there will be obsessional, hysterical or perverse film-makers, and so on. This approach breaks the tissue of the film on principle and accords no intrinsic importance to its manifest content, which becomes simply a kind of (discontinuous) reservoir of more or less isolated clues whose immediate purpose is to reveal the latent. Here it is not the film that interests the analyst but the film-maker. Hence everything depends on two postulates, that of the biographical and that of the pathological; it is to contract them into one word that I have spoken of nosography.

18. [In the French text there follows here a section in which Metz categorises Freud's various writings and considers their relevance to the study of the cinema, concluding: 'We should not be surprised if overall the semiology of the cinema turns out to rely more on those texts of Freud's that do not appear to be its special concern (the theoretical and metapsychological studies) than on those that would seem more directly related to the undertaking in its two aspects, aesthetic and socio-historical.']

This theme has a variation in which everything remains the same except the sharp distinction between the normal and the pathological (in this the variation is closer to Freud's teachings). The concern for classification remains, but it is demedicalised; the result is a kind of psychoanalytically inspired characterology which no longer divides up neuroses but rather metapsychological and economic types which are 'normal' or else common to the normal and the pathological (someone's 'character' is his potential neurosis; moreover, this neurosis is always capable of being actualised). The 'biographism' remains complete, and with it the indifference to the filmic text as such.

We have not yet had to 'choose' between a study of the signifier and a study of the signified, but rather between a study of the text and a study of the non-text. The two approaches I have just rapidly outlined are not defined by their orientation towards the 'pure signified', or at least not so immediately as to reveal any naivety, inexperience or blindness about the specific work of the signifier. They are open to such a criticism, but in other directions: they run the risk of freezing and impoverishing the signification of films insofar as they constantly threaten to relapse into a belief in an ultimate signified (unique, static and definitive), here the *typological membership* by the film-maker of a category, whether pathological or merely psychical; they also contain another inherent threat of reduction flowing directly from this first one: psychologising reduction and the ideology of pure 'creation'; by definition they neglect everything other than the conscious and unconscious psychism of the film-maker as an individual, everything that is a direct social imprint and ensures that no one is ever the 'author' of his 'works': influences and pressures of an ideological kind, the objective state of the cinematic codes and techniques at the moment of shooting, etc. Thus they only have validity (and I think they do have validity) if their purpose is strictly signalled from the beginning (= principle of pertinence) and then checked en route: if they are clearly presented as attempts at *diagnosis* (nosographic or characterological) applied to *persons* (film-makers), thus explicitly proclaiming their indifference both to the textual and to the social.

But it would be inaccurate to speak of their indifference to the signifier, although this is sometimes done when their literary equivalents are under discussion. Inaccurate in two ways. Not only is it a principle of these investigations to constitute certain aspects of the film into so many signifiers (manifest signifiers of a less apparent psychism), but it may turn out that the filmic features thus selected themselves belong within the film to what the semiologist would rank on the 'plane of the signifier'. The habitual themes of a film-maker, his characters, the period in which he likes to situate his plots, can tell us about his individual nature, but so can the way he moves (or fixes) the camera, how

- 34 he cuts and edits his sequences. — These two approaches of investigation are thus not exactly 'studies of the signified'. What is peculiar to them is the fact that they are interested in persons and not in *discursive facts* (= filmic texts or cinematic codes): the latter do not concern them in their internal logic but rather as a neutral milieu in which they seek the sporadic indications that improve their understanding of the former.

This leads me to a third orientation which this time attains the film as discourse. It is not so easy to delineate as the first two, and I am not yet sure that I am very clear about it in my own mind; therefore, as a somewhat simplifying first step, I shall call it the *psychoanalytic study of film scripts*. Of course, it does not always confine itself to the script in the narrowest sense of the term (the written sheets followed in shooting the film); it also extends to a large number of features that do not appear in that written skeleton (which is more or less absent in the making of certain films anyway) and yet form part of the script in the broad sense — in the true sense: a script if need be implicit, a definitive script after editing — insofar as it is still a question of elements with something to do with the plot, 'situations', characters, landscapes, possibly 'period details', etc; in short, the manifest thematic complex of the film, envisaged if necessary in extreme detail. So defined, the script represents a rather ambiguous, fleeting instance, and an all the more interesting one for that.¹⁹ In certain respects it is on the side of the signified: this is clear if we set facing it, by a kind of commutation, the various codes via which it is grasped by the spectator, cinematic codes (= visual and auditory analogy, editing, etc) or non-cinematic codes such as the *langue* of verbal language in talking films: so many systems which serve to *communicate* the script, which should not be confused with it and with respect to which it becomes a signified. A signified that is defined as the set of apparent themes of the film, as its most literal purport (= circumstantial denotation). Obviously it is not the most important signification of the film, but it remains indispensable if one wishes to go further, as psychoanalytic studies of the script do. Hence the first effect of such studies is to transform the script into a signifier and to disengage from it some less immediately visible significations.

To disengage them, or rather to *open on to them* (I should almost say: engage them). For there can be no claim to unveil a hidden meaning, a kind of second script, armed from head to toe, as clear and peremptory as the first, distinguished from it only by its hidden status; this would turn into a preposterous and

19. 'Interminable script' says one of my students (Jorge Dana), for, in a film, everything can be diegeticised.

childish 'hide-and-seek', with the hidden having the same texture, the same facture as the unhidden (hence it would have to have been hidden deliberately! Dreams themselves have no latent meaning in this sense: there is no second dream beneath the dream, there is only one dream which is manifest and opens on to a never ending series of non-apparent significations). Nor is it a question of wishing to endow the film (to swell it, to make it big) with three or four more and more 'profound' levels of meaning, retaining the notion of a fixed and finite number and the conception of each as an instance with the same order of relationship to explicitness (with differences of degree) as the true script (the script as such: there is only one): this would still be to believe, at a lower gear, in an inclusive signified and so to block the infinite *pursuit* of the symbolic which, in a sense (like the imaginary from which it is spun), lies entirely in its flight.

On this point I have partly changed my mind – or if you prefer, this is something I regard as a contribution of psychoanalysis to linguistics – about the corresponding passages in my book *Langage et cinéma* (Larousse, Paris 1971; translated as *Language and Cinema*, Mouton, The Hague 1974), and especially about the notion of a 'textual system' as I presented it there (Chapters V and VI, pp 53-90 in the French; pp 70-120 in the English). There certainly is textual system, meaning thereby something always of a structural and relational (but not necessarily exhaustible) order, and peculiar to a given film, not to the cinema, distinct from every code and combining several of them. But I no longer believe that each film has a textual system (the one I suggested for a film of Griffith's, *Intolerance* – pp 81-3 in the French; pp 107-11 in the English – is only one of the systems possible, a stage in the work of interpretation, a stage inadequately presented as such at the time), nor even, a possibility I foresaw in a special chapter (Chapter VI.4), a fixed number of quite distinct textual systems (several 'readings' of the same film). In this (or these) system(s), I now see working conveniences – that is precisely why they impressed themselves upon me in the first place – sorts of 'blocs of interpretation' already foreseen or established by the analysis, sectors of signification (or in some cases a single vast sector) that the analysis has already *selected* at different moments in its in fact interminable movement from the indefinite thickness of the textual system as I now see it, that is, as this perpetual possibility of a finer, or else less apparent structuration, of a grouping of the elements into a new configuration, of the registration of a new *significatory pressure* which does not annul the preceding ones (as in the unconscious, where everything is accumulated), but complements or in other cases distorts and complicates them, at any rate points in a slightly different direction, a little to one side (a little or more than a little). In *Langage et cinéma*, I already attached great importance to the dynamic aspect of the textual

36 system, a production rather than a product, which distinguishes it from the static character proper to the codes; at present I feel that this pressure, this 'activity', come into play not only inside a textual system but for any one film between each and the next one to be discovered; or, if it is thought that there is only one such system in all, then the analyst will never complete his exploration of it and should not seek any 'end'.

Thus analyses of scripts – the script is one aspect among others in the textual system – wish to go further than the script itself, than what is occasionally called the 'plot pure and simple' (inaccurately, however, for this manifest level also includes the characters, their social positions, the diegetic locations, the indicators of period and many other factors that go beyond the action). The instance of the script, in the wide sense I am giving it, now shifts to the side of the signifier, since it is no longer related to the codes of expression that communicate it, but to the interpretations on to which it opens. In order to show, as a recent doctoral thesis does (Danielle Digne: *L'empire et la marque*, Mémoire de troisième cycle, 1975), that one of the 'meanings' of Howard Hawks's *Red River* is to present a justification of private property and the right of conquest, and that another of its meanings is to be found in a misogynist variant of male homosexuality, it is the film script above all that has to be examined for the corresponding clues (signifiers). The script has ceased to be a signified: nowhere in the film is what I have just said plainly inscribed. To study the script from a psychoanalytic (or more broadly semiotic) viewpoint is to constitute it into a signifier.

In this the script is like a dream, as are many human products. The manifest dream, ie the dream as such – 'dream content' for Freud, in opposition to 'dream thoughts' – is a signifier for the interpretation, and yet it has itself only been *established* (narrated, and to begin with communicated to the conscious apperception of the dreamer) as the signified of different codes of expression, including the *langue* of verbal language (one does not dream in languages one does not know). There would be no manifest dream, and hence no interpretation, if, for example, the dreamer failed to identify any of the visual objects in the dream, ie if he was unfamiliar with the code of socialised perception; it is because he recognises some of them that others he is unable to identify take on their true value of enigmas, or that composite objects (= condensations) appear as such, which presupposes some idea, or suspicion, of the different objects superimposed into one, and first of all of their plurality. The imaginary itself needs to be symbolised, and Freud noted ('The Interpretation of Dreams', *Standard Edition*, op cit, Vol V, p 499; and 'Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams', *ibid*, Vol XIV, p 229) that without secondary revision (without codes) there would be no dreams, for the secondary process is the condition on which access to perception

and consciousness is possible. For the same reason, the script, a conscious and perceived instance, must be signified itself before it can be made to signify anything else at all. 37

Hence analyses of scripts are not studies of the signified. What strikes me is rather the fact that they are sometimes considered as such. An error which is part of another more general one; it is easy to forget that every signifier itself needs to be signified and that every signified, in turn, can but be a signifier (this constant back and forth is precisely the work of the symbolic; it is not possible to constitute some elements as 'pure' signifiers and others as 'pure' signifieds – the adjective 'pure' is a very tiresome one anyway – except with respect to a precise code, a given investigation: to one segment and one only in the indefinite chain of signification). – The result is that two different things are confused with the script: its place in the text, in the film (everywhere a manifest instance), in which it is the apparent signifieds of apparent signifiers, and its place in the textual system, a non-manifest instance whose apparent signifier it is (or at any rate one of its apparent signifiers). At this point the suggestions of linguistics and those of psychoanalysis coincide perfectly. Relying solely on the former I had carefully distinguished between the text, an attested progression, and the textual system, which is never given and does not pre-exist the semiologist's work of construction (see *Langage et cinéma*, especially p 60 in the French; pp 78-9 in the English): this was already to define the gap between them as that between a manifest content and its interpretation. The textual system shares the status Freud sometimes called *latent*²⁰ and which includes both the unconscious and the preconscious.

Certain studies of scripts are directed above all at unconscious significations, and thus correspond to what is normally expected of a psychoanalytically inspired approach. Others work principally at the level of preconscious significations: eg most of those studies described as 'ideological' (I gave an example a moment ago vis-à-vis *Red River*), turned towards 'layers of meaning' which do not feature directly in the film but constitute its implicit rather than its unconscious part. It does not follow that studies of the preconscious of the script are necessarily 'less psychanalytic': it all depends on the way they are conducted, and psychoanalysis includes a theory of the preconscious (Freud did not regard this instance as an accessory one, he showed great interest in it, notably in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*; he reckoned that a kind of 'second censorship' dynamically linked to the first

20. Eg in chapter I of 'The Unconscious' (*Standard Edition*, op cit, Vol XIV, pp 167 and 170). I use this definition of 'latent' because it is convenient here. But it is well known that Freud reserved it for the preconscious in other cases; thus in 'The Ego and the Id' *ibid*, Vol XIX, p 15), or in the distinction between 'latent content' and 'unconscious desire' vis-à-vis dreams.

38 divided the preconscious topographically from the conscious – see ‘The Unconscious’, *Standard Edition* op cit, Vol XIV, pp 173, 191, 193-4 and ‘The Interpretation of Dreams’, *ibid*, Vol V, pp 615, 617-8). Nor does it follow that ideology is an exclusively pre-conscious production: more probably, like many other things, it has its preconscious strata and its unconscious strata, even if the latter have hardly been explored as yet (not at all before Deleuze, Guattari and Lyotard)²¹ and differ more or less from ideology in its classical conception. Ideological studies at the moment simply stick most often (as a point of fact, not one of principle) to pre-conscious ideology. As is well known, it is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari criticise them, anxious as they are to trace the imprint of history in the unconscious itself and hence rather sceptical about the very notion of ideology, at least in its current forms.

At any rate, once analyses of scripts are at all profound and do more than state the obvious, they propose the perspective of a ‘latent’ region which they wish to approach. That is surely why in certain cases they are hard to distinguish from another – fourth – possible kind of psychoanalytic studies of films: those that have the textual system, interpretation as their aim, like the preceding ones, but set out for it from the manifest filmic material as a whole (signifieds and signifiers), not from the manifest signified (the script) alone. It is the film as a whole that is now constituted into a signifier. Thus what is striking in the both ideological and psychoanalytic interpretation proposed by Jean-Paul Dumont and Jean Monod for Stanley Kubrick’s film 2001: *a Space Odyssey* (*Le foetus astral*, Christian Bourgois, Paris 1970), is that the elements they take as clues come not only from the thematics of the film but also from the specifically cinematic signifier, or at least from the use the film studied makes of it; in the structural grids of occurrences and co-occurrences that the authors establish, we find, for example (p 149), the items ‘Track

21. [Gilles Deleuze has written many works of philosophy, including studies of the English empiricists, Spinoza and Nietzsche. In 1973, together with Félix Guattari, he published *L’Anti-Œdipe*, a critique of Freud (also directed against Lacan) that re-emphasises Freud’s notion of a libidinal economy, arguing that human beings are ‘desiring machines’, mechanisms channeling and rechanneling libidinal flows, that societies are no more than extensions of this channeling, and that Freud’s (and Lacan’s) insistence on the Œdipus complex represents a blocking of the productivity of these machines in the interests of the institution of the family and the repressive political apparatuses that institution gives rise to. Jean-François Lyotard has written studies of the visual arts from a similar (but not identical) position: cf *Discours, Figure*, Editions Klincksieck, Paris 1971.]

forward', 'Track back', as well as 'Weight', 'Weightlessness', 'Spaceship', 'Bone thrown in the air by an ape', etc. This approach raises difficulties insofar as the cinematic elements and the script elements are not revealing *in the same way* (the authors are too inclined to 'diegeticise' the signifier), and what is most revealing, what gives us the most central access to the textual system, is no doubt the relation between the two sets of elements rather than the ones, the others or their addition. But in one point, and a very important one, the method has to be approved: the filmic signifier is as indicative as its signified of the latent significations of the film, the entire apparent material is open to a symptomatic reading (this is to return to the banal but true observation usually rather badly expressed as 'the "form" of a film tells us as much as its "content" about its "true meaning"'). Raymond Bellour's study of Hitchcock's *North by North-West*, 'Le Blocage symbolique', in *Communications* n 23 op cit shows, I believe, what is to be expected of a psychoanalytic approach to films which is at once attentive to the signifier, to the script, and to their mutual articulation; the Oedipal structure this analysis brings to light informs the script (as it were on the large scale) but also the montage tables in the sequence, on a smaller scale, so that the (non-manifest) relation between the manifest signifier and the manifest signified of the film is that of a mirror reduplication or an insistence, of a metaphor of microcosm and macrocosm: the latent is doubly anchored in the apparent, it can be read in it twice over, in two sizes, in a spiral movement. With this movement, which is not precisely cinematic and does not concern just the story told but is installed just between the two (and would be different in the other films), we are really getting close to the order of the textual system as I understand it.

Investigations of this kind (the fourth kind on my list) are thus *studies of textual systems*. Those of the third group, for which I shall retain the name studies of scripts, are also studies of textual systems, but from a narrower angle of incidence: the script is part of the apparent data, but not all of it, one of the elements that leads up to interpretation, but not the only one. Artificially isolating it from the others one runs the risk of falsifying the textual system overall, since the latter forms a whole, and this might be enough to invalidate analyses of scripts on principle. But for many films, and not always ones of no interest, this disadvantage is less than it might seem, since the script dimension plays a considerable part in them while the work of the cinematic signifier is not very great. With other films, on the contrary (I shall return to this point), the analysis of the script is from the start an inadequate approach, inadequate to different degrees moreover, as different as the relative importance of the script in the textual system, which varies greatly from film to film.

40 The more I unfold (for the moment only at the preconscious level) the scientific imaginary initially expressed in a single sentence, the closer I get to the problems posed a psychoanalytic study by the signifier of the cinema as such, by the level of 'cinematic specificity'. It is a characteristic of analyses of scripts that they disregard this level: the Freudian inspiration finds a place in them as it would in aesthetic studies outside the cinema (and with the same difficulties, which I shall leave aside here because they are so familiar). These investigations may be psychoanalytic but they are not basically cinematic (though very well suited to certain films for that very reason). What they 'psychoanalyse' is not the cinema but a story which happens to have been told by it (and there are many such stories). The script of a film may be treated just like a novel and the already classical dossier of the relations between psychoanalysis and literary criticism could be introduced here en bloc (= the absence of the couch and hence of real transference, the precise scope of the method proposed by Mauron, etc). To sum up, what distinguishes studies of scripts (and also nosographic or characterological studies) from the approach I am trying to define here, and towards which I am slowly making my way via everything which is not that approach, is, as I have tried to show by this traversal, not so much that they are indifferent to the signifier as that they are indifferent to the *cinematic* signifier.

It will perhaps be thought astonishing that in this lengthy discussion of studies of scripts I have not even thought of recalling that they become impossible in the case of certain films, *films without scripts*, 'abstract' films, the 'avant-garde' films of the 1920's, current experimental films, etc. Or else (an attenuated version of the same observation) that when these studies are possible, their interest declines in proportion that (even if it retains a 'plot') the film they apprehend escapes the full regime of narration-representation (every possible intermediate case exists; Eisenstein's films are diegetic, but they are less so than most Hollywood productions). – What is peculiar to these films is the fact that in them to one degree or another the cinematic signifier abandons the status of a neutral and transparent vehicle at the direct behest of a manifest signified which alone is important (= the script), and that on the contrary it tends to inscribe its own action in them, to take over a more and more important part of the overall signification of the film, thus more and more invalidating studies of scripts, to the point of making them impossible.

As for studies in the fourth category (complete studies of the textual system), they are marked on the contrary by their concern for the signifier. They even cast a particularly effective light on how it works insofar as, like every textual study, they visualise it within the bounds of a limited *corpus* (one film, several films by the same author or in the same genre) that can be explored in

great detail. However, psychoanalytic knowledge of the signifier of the cinema (the *cinema-signifier*) is not their sole and specific object (that object is the structure of a film, hence the name I have given them). I have attempted elsewhere (*Langage et cinéma*, especially Chapter VI.3) to show that the textual system, the interpretation of each film in its uniqueness, constitutes by definition a kind of *mixed site* in which specific codes (codes more or less peculiar to the cinema and only the cinema) and non-specific codes (codes more or less common to various 'languages' and a state of culture) meet and combine one with another; indeed, although the figures of the cinema, considered in their most immediate signification, can themselves be analysed into a signifier and a signified, and the cultural figures, too, the former are all ranked with the signifier and the latter with the (manifest) signified, once less instantaneous and *proximate* significations are envisaged, in other words once it is the whole film that is taken into consideration (as in studies of the textual system precisely) rather than the 'value' of a given camera movement or sentence of the dialogue (see *Langage et cinéma*, especially Chapter X.7). The latent signification of a singular 'work' in any art always has something to do with this *coupling* of a global signifier with a global signified, or rather of a specificity and a generality both of which signify; it is an instance – a *pressure*, rather – which is always profoundly and intimately reversible and mixed: what it 'tells' us touches on the particular art itself but also on something else (man, society, the author) and it tells us all this together, at a stroke as it were. The work of art steals the art from us at the same time as it presents it to us, because it is both less and more than it. Every film shows us the cinema, and is also its death.

That is why there is room for a special kind of psychoanalytic reflection on the cinema specifically devoted to the cinema itself (and not to films), to the signifier as such. Of course there will be overlapping phenomena here as everywhere else, and care must be taken to avoid aggressively (fearfully) erecting this orientation of work into a fortified sector, solitary and cut off from the others. The psychoanalytic knowledge of the cinematic signifier can advance on a broad front thanks to textual studies particularly attentive to the peculiar play of the cinema in their texts, and also thanks to the analysis of certain films in which the work of the cinema is more important than it is in others (it is in these two respects in particular that I believe investigations like those of Thierry Kuntzel – eg 'Le Travail du film II' in *Communications* n 23 op cit – are of great interest). Another approach – the one I have had in view and have now reached – consists of a direct examination, outside any particular film, of the psychoanalytic implications of the *cinematic*; I shall make this examination, or begin to make it, in the second half of this article (sections III, IV and V).

42 It is indeed well known that different 'languages' (painting, music, cinema, etc) are distinguished from one another – and are first *several* – by means of their signifiers, in the physical and perceptual definition of those signifiers as well as in the formal and structural features that flow from them, and not by means of their signifieds, or at any rate, not immediately (see *Langage et cinéma* Chapter X, completely concerned with this problem). There is no signified which is peculiar to literature or on the contrary to the cinema, no 'great global signified' that might be attributed to painting itself, for example (= one more mythical avatar of the belief in an ultimate signified). Each means of expression allows everything to be said: by 'everything' I mean an indefinite number of 'things' (?), very broadly coinciding from one language to another. Obviously each one says them in its own way, and that is precisely why it sometimes seems there should be such a great signified. But a signified which is still very badly named, since it can only be approached in terms of a signifier: the cinematic does not consist of some static list of themes or subjects which are supposed to be especially apt for the cinema and for which the other arts have a lesser 'vocation' (a truly metaphysical conception, proceeding by *essences*), it can only be defined, or rather foreseen, as a special way of saying anything (or nothing), ie as a *signifier effect*: a specific coefficient of signification (and not a signified) linked to the intrinsic workings of the cinema and to its very adoption rather than that of another machine, another apparatus. – In linguistic terms, I shall say that what calls for psychoanalytic illumination is not just each film (not just films) but also the pertinent features of the matter of the signifier in the cinema, and the specific codes that these features allow: the matter of the signifier and the form of the signifier, in Hjelmslev's sense.

A study of the signifier, but not necessarily of the cinema 'in general' (= the statement of propositions each of which applies to all films). For there are many intermediate stages. Relatively narrow groupings such as the set of all films by one film-maker or belonging to one very historically circumscribed 'genre' give rise to investigations which remain very close to textual analyses. But there are also wider categories, sorts of 'super-genres', which I would rather describe as so many *great cinematic regimes*: each one still corresponds to a group of films, but only virtually, for the group is vast and allows of no explicit enumeration (and also because these regimes are very often intermingled, such that one and the same film belongs to several of them at once). What is paradoxical about these regimes, which correspond to the main *cinematic formulae* so far, is that quite often they are evanescent and uncertain in their boundaries, which break into an indefinite series of special cases, and yet they are very clear and sharply

defined in their centres of gravity: that is why they can be defined in comprehension but not in extension. Blurred institutions, but full ones. The spectator accustomed to the cinema (the native) is quite at home with them, they are mental categories he has and can handle. He may have seen many so-called 'fictional documentaries' (and the expression already witnesses to a mixture of genres, hence to two genres which are distinct in principle), but he has no doubt that the documentary and the 'story film' remain autonomous in their definitions and that on other occasions they are each manifested in a pure, or at any rate purer, state.

It is not my aim here to list these great genres exhaustively; I am interested in their status, not in their enumeration. There are a number of them, some of which are arranged in series. Each series forms a paradigm (in logical terms a sum of complementary classes) the set of which coincides with cinematic production as a whole, but divides it up differently from the other series. Thus the series 'Newsreel/documentary film/trailer/advertising film/' 'main' film'. Or 'Colour film/black-and-white film', 'Silent film/sound film'. (It is clear that some categories have clearer boundaries than others.) In other cases no real series is constituted; instead there is a certain 'sort' of films, felt socially to be slightly apart (precisely a sort) and opposed en bloc to all other films; the latter become 'ordinary films' (= films not marked in the respect considered). There are 3-D films and the rest, cinemascope films and the rest, cinerama films and the rest, etc.

One of the most important of these various divisions for any study of the cinematic signifier (inaugurator of these classifications), and particularly for a psychoanalytic one, is also, as so often happens, one of the most blurred in its external contours, one of the most difficult (the most impossible) to establish by enumeration. This is the division that puts on one side the films I call diegetic (narrative-representational films) and on the other those that do not tell a story, this pair being connected by a particularly impressive gradation of specific or mixed positions.²² The importance of this distinction, what makes it so real in all types of reflection from the most 'naive' to the most theoretical, despite its fleeting nature, is factors which are essentially historical (= industrial, ideological, psychoanalytic, etc), which are independent of each spectator's taste or distaste for the fiction film (on the contrary, this taste is dependent on what is anyway a complex factual situation). Since its birth at the end of the nineteenth century the cinema has, as it were, been snapped up by the Western, Aristotelean tradition of the fictional and representational arts, of *diegesis* and *mimesis*, for which its spectators were

22. Between my writing this article and the correction of the proofs a book has appeared which provides a remarkable study of one of these intermediate positions: *Muriel*, by Claude Bailbé, Michel Marie and Marie-Claire Ropars (Editions Galilée, Paris 1975).

44 prepared – prepared in spirit, but also instinctually – by their experience of the novel, of theatre, of figurative painting, and which was thus the most profitable tradition for the cinema industry. Most films made today still belong in some degree to the fictional formula; I have attempted to explain why and how in an article in *Communications* n 23 op cit.

It should also be noted that the fictional division, in its (historically rather revealing) formal mechanism, acts in a manner opposite to that of the other paradigms I have cited. It distinguishes the narrative films from all the rest, ie the 'positive' pole, the one that is given a definition, corresponds to the majority of films and not to the minority, as it does when cinerama films are opposed to 'ordinary' films. At the moment it is the film felt ideologically to be ordinary (the fiction film) that serves as a reference point and opens the paradigm, and on the contrary the category of 'all the rest' groups fewer films and ones society regards as slightly strange (at any rate when they are full-length films claiming equality with the 'main film'). The *marking* is troubled here: it would seem that it should be the non-fiction film that would be offered as the marked term since it is more uncommon and more 'special', and yet (and this is rather uncommon) it is the unmarked term, the fiction film, that is posed first and with respect to which there is a *rest*. This peculiar disposition of the mark can be seen whenever society opposes a normality to a marginality: the marginal (as the word suggests) comes 'after', it is a residue, it could not function as a primary, positive term; but as the positive is also in a majority (and the term 'normal' contains both these notions at once), the more uncommon marginal is marked while remaining a rest. Here we see once again that formal configurations are fully socio-ideological in scope (the objectively dominant position of the fiction film has repercussions in ordinary mental divisions), and that the latter open on to something latent which in this passage I have only designated at its preconscious level; there are regions of the preconscious which are kept apart from consciousness in a fairly regular way but without access to them needing an analytic cure or a true removal of repression. One should not be in too much of a hurry to attribute everything implicit or unspoken, even when it is fairly permanently so, to the unconscious. However, this marginal status of the non-fiction film might be traced to unconscious roots. It is enough that these two stages be not confused.

The fiction film is the film in which the cinematic signifier does not work on its own account but is employed entirely to remove the traces of its own steps, to open immediately on to the transparency of a signified, of a story, which is in reality manufactured by it but which it seems merely to 'illustrate', to transmit to us after the event, as if it had existed previously (= referential illusion): another example of a product which is its own pro-

duction in reverse. This *previous existence effect* – this gentle hum of a ‘once-upon-a-time’, of an essential childhood – is surely one of the great (and largely unconscious) charms of all fiction in the very many cultures where fiction is found. Thus the fiction film represents both the negation of the signifier (an attempt to have it forgotten) and a certain working regime of that signifier, to be quite precise the very regime required to get it forgotten (more or less forgotten, according to whether the film is more or less engulfed in its script alone). Hence what distinguishes fiction films is not the ‘absence’ of a special work of the signifier, but its presence in the mode of denegation, and it is well known that this type of presence is one of the strongest there are. It is important to study this play of presence-absence, which André Bazin already foresaw in his notion of ‘classical editing’, it is important to explore the cinematic signifier in its fictional regime. On the other hand, as I have said, the more a film can be reduced to its diegesis, the less the study of its signifier is important for the textual system. This is not contradictory: the diegetic formula of the signifier is a complex mechanism which is not as yet well understood, but whatever precisely it turns out to be, it concerns a very large number of films and hence none of them in particular.

Thus there are broad categories (fiction film, colour film, cinema-scope film, etc) which seem not to be enumerable sets of films (even if they sometimes are such sets to a certain extent) so much as the different faces of the cinema itself, or at least those of its faces that it has already shown us, for it has others in reserve for us in the future. One can concern oneself with them as such, and still be studying the cinema-signifier via one or other of its great institutional modes. The most pertinent methodological distinction in a semiological perspective is not the opposition between the singular film (= one film and it alone) and the cinema as a whole (= all existing films), but that between studies of texts and studies of codes. In either case one may be dealing with groups of films, reducible to one only for textual analyses, extendable to the whole cinema for analyses of codes. The incidence of the gap which remains is to separate groups which can be mastered in extension from those that cannot be approached by way of the text (ie as a *corpus*) because of their indefinite character or their enormous size, and can only be grasped by the direct study of certain pertinent features of the signifier (immediately common to an indeterminate number of films), and are besides, from the moment of their historical or sociological definition, less groups of films than aspects of the cinema. Their analysis is related to those that bear on the entire cinema and thus belongs to the same kind of investigation.

'What contribution can Freudian psychoanalysis make to the knowledge of the cinematic signifier?': that was the question-dream I posed (the scientific imaginary wishing to be symbolised), and it seems to me that I have now more or less *unwound* it; unwound but no more; I have not given it an answer. I have simply paid attention to what it was I wished to say (one never knows this until one has written it down), I have only questioned my question: this unanswered character is one that has to be deliberately accepted, it is constitutive of any epistemological approach.

Since I have wished to mark the places (as empty boxes some of which are beginning to fill without waiting for me, and so much the better), the places of different directions of work, and particularly of the last, the psychoanalytic exploration of the signifier, which concerns me especially, I must now begin to inscribe something in this last box; must take further, and more plainly in the direction of the unconscious, the analysis of the investigator's desire that makes me write. And to start with this certainly means asking a new question: among the specific features of the cinematic signifier that distinguish the cinema from literature, painting, etc., which ones by nature call most directly on the type of knowledge that psychoanalysis alone can provide?

III.1 Perception, imaginary

The cinema's signifier is *perceptual* (visual and auditory). So is that of literature, since the written chain has to be *read*, but it involves a more restricted perceptual register: only graphemes, writing. So too are those of painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, but still within limits, and different ones; absence of auditory perception, absence in the visual itself of certain important dimensions such as time and movement (obviously there is the time of the look, but the object looked at is not inscribed in a precise and ordered time sequence forced on the spectator from outside). Music's signifier is perceptual as well, but, like the others, less 'extensive' than that of the cinema: here it is vision which is absent, and even in the auditory, extended speech (except in song). What first strikes one then is that the cinema is *more perceptual*, if the phrase is allowable, than many other means of expression; it mobilises a larger number of the axes of perception. (That is why the cinema has sometimes been presented as a 'synthesis of all the arts'; which does not mean very much, but considering the quantitative tally of the registers of perception, it is true that the cinema 'englobes' in itself the signifiers of other arts: it can present pictures to us, make us hear music, it is made of photographs, etc.)

Nevertheless, this as it were numerical 'superiority' disappears

if the cinema is compared with the theatre, the opera and other spectacles of the same type. The latter too involve sight and hearing simultaneously, linguistic audition and non-linguistic audition, movement, real temporal progression. Their difference from the cinema lies elsewhere: they do not consist of *images*, the perceptions they offer to the eye and the ear are inscribed in a true space (not a photographed one), the same one as that occupied by the public during the performance; everything the audience hear and see is actively produced in their presence, by human beings or props which are themselves present. This is not the problem of fiction but that of the definitional characteristics of the signifier: whether or no the theatrical play mimes a fable, its *action*, if need be mimetic, is still managed by real persons evolving in real time and space, *on the same stage or 'scene' as the public*. The 'other scene', which is precisely not so called, is the cinematic screen (closer to fantasy from the outset): what unfolds there may, as before, be more or less fictional, but the unfolding itself is fictive: the actor, the 'décor', the words one hears are all absent, everything is *recorded* (as a memory trace which is immediately so, without having been something else before), and this is still true if what is recorded is not a 'story' and does not aim for the fictional illusion proper. For it is the signifier itself, and as a whole, that is recorded, that is absence: a little rolled up perforated strip which 'contains' vast landscapes, fixed battles, the melting of the ice on the River Neva, and whole life-times, and yet can be enclosed in the familiar round metal tin, of modest dimensions, clear proof that it does not 'really' contain all that.

At the theatre, Sarah Bernhardt may tell me she is Phèdre or, if the play were from another period and rejected the figurative regime, she might say, as in a type of modern theatre, that she is Sarah Bernhardt. But at any rate, I should see Sarah Bernhardt. At the cinema, she could make the same two kinds of speeches too, but it would be her shadow that would be offering them to me (or she would be offering them in her own absence). Every film is a fiction film.

What is at issue is not just the actor. Today there are a theatre and a cinema without actors, or in which they have at least ceased to take on the full and exclusive function which characterises them in classical spectacles. But what is true of Sarah Bernhardt is just as true of an object, a prop, a chair for example. On the theatre stage, this chair may, as in Chekhov, pretend to be the chair in which the melancholy Russian nobleman sits every evening; on the contrary (in Ionesco), it can explain to me that it is a theatre chair. But in the end it is a chair. In the cinema, it will have to choose between a similar two attitudes (and many other intermediate or more tricky ones), but it will not be there when the spectators see it, when they have to recognise the choice; it will have delegated its reflection to *them*.

48 Characteristic of the cinema is not the imaginary that it may happen to represent, it is the imaginary that it is from the start, the imaginary that constitutes it as a signifier (the two are not unrelated; it is so apt to represent it because it is it; however, it is still it when it no longer represents it). The (possible) reduplication inaugurating the intention of fiction is preceded in the cinema by a first reduplication, always-already achieved, which inaugurates the signifier. The imaginary, by definition, combines within it a certain presence and a certain absence. In the cinema it is not just the fictional signified, if there is one, that is thus made present in the mode of absence, it is from the outset the signifier.

Thus the cinema, 'more perceptual' than certain arts according to the list of its sensory registers, is also 'less perceptual' than others once the status of these perceptions is envisaged rather than their number or diversity: for its perceptions are all in a sense 'false'. Or rather, the activity of perception in it is real (the cinema is not a fantasy), but the perceived is not really the object, it is its shade, its phantom, its double, its *replica* in a new kind of mirror. — It will be said that literature, after all, is itself only made of replicas (written words, presenting absent objects). But at least it does not present them to us with all the really perceived detail that the screen does (giving more and taking the same, ie taking more). — The unique position of the cinema lies in this dual character of its signifier: unaccustomed perceptual wealth, but unusually profoundly stamped with unreality, from its very beginning. More than the other arts, or in a more unique way, the cinema involves us in the imaginary: it drums up all perception, but to switch it immediately over into its own absence, which is nonetheless the only signifier present.

III.2 *The all-perceiving subject*

Thus film is like the mirror. But it differs from the primordial mirror in one essential point: although, as in the latter, everything may come to be projected, there is one thing, and one thing only that is never reflected in it: the spectator's own body. In a certain emplacement, the mirror suddenly becomes clear glass.

In the mirror the child perceives the familiar household objects, and also its object *par excellence*, its mother, who holds it up in her arms to the glass. But above all it perceives its own image. This is where primary identification (the formation of the ego) gets certain of its main characteristics: the child sees itself as an other, and beside an other. This other other is its guarantee that the first is really it: by her authority, her sanction, in the register of the symbolic, subsequently by the resemblance between her mirror image and the child's (both have a human form). Thus the child's ego is formed by identification with its like, and this in two senses simultaneously, metonymically and metaphorically: the

other human being who is in the glass, the own reflection which is and is not the body, which is like it. The child identifies with itself as an object.

In the cinema, the object remains: fiction or no, there is always something on the screen. But the reflection of the own body has disappeared. The cinema spectator is not a child and the child really at the mirror stage (from around six to around eighteen months) would certainly be incapable of 'following' the simplest of films. Thus, what *makes possible* the spectator's absence from the screen – or rather the intelligible unfolding of the film despite that absence – is the fact that the spectator has already known the experience of the mirror (of the true mirror), and is thus able to constitute a world of objects without having first to recognise himself within it. In this respect, the cinema is already on the side of the symbolic (which is only to be expected): the spectator knows that objects exist, that he himself exists as a subject, that he becomes an object for others: he knows himself and he knows his like: it is no longer necessary that this similarity be literally *depicted* for him on the screen, as it was in the mirror of his childhood. Like every other broadly 'secondary' activity, the practice of the cinema presupposes that the primitive undifferentiation of the ego and the non-ego has been overcome.

But *with what*, then, does the spectator identify during the projection of the film? For he certainly has to identify: identification in its primal form has ceased to be a current necessity for him, but – on pain of the film becoming incomprehensible, considerably more incomprehensible than the most incomprehensible films – he continues to depend in the cinema on that permanent play of identification without which there would be no social life (thus, the simplest conversation presupposes the alternation of the *I* and the *you*, hence the aptitude of the two interlocutors for a mutual and reversible identification). What form does this *continued* identification, whose essential role Lacan has demonstrated even in the most abstract reasoning ('Le temps logique et l'assertion de certitude anticipée,' *Ecrits*, op cit, pp 197-213); and which constituted the 'social sentiment' for Freud (= the sublimation of a homosexual libido, itself a reaction to the aggressive rivalry of the members of a single generation after the murder of the father),²³ take in the special case of one social practice among others, cinematic projection?

Obviously the spectator has the opportunity to identify with the *character* of the fiction. But there still has to be one. This is thus only valid for the narrative-representational film, and not for the psychoanalytic constitution of the signifier of the cinema as such.

23. 'The Ego and the Id,' *Standard Edition*, op cit, Vol XIX, pp 26 and 30 (= 'desexualised social sentiment'); see also (on paranoia) 'On Narcissism: an Introduction,' *ibid*, Vol XIV, pp 95-6, 101-2.

50 The spectator can also identify with the *actor*, in more or less 'afictional' films in which the latter is represented as an actor, not a character, but is still offered thereby as a human being (as a perceived human being) and thus allows identification. However this factor (even added to the previous one and thus covering a very large number of films) cannot suffice. It only designates secondary identification in certain of its forms (secondary in the cinematic process itself, since in any other sense all identification except that of the mirror can be regarded as secondary).

An insufficient explanation, and for two reasons, the first of which is only the intermittent, anecdotal and superficial consequence of the second (but for that reason more visible, and that is why I call it the first). The cinema deviates from the theatre in an important point that has often been emphasised: it often presents us with long sequences that can (literally) be called 'in-human' – the familiar theme of cinematic 'cosmomorphism' developed by many film theorists – sequences in which only inanimate objects, landscapes, etc. appear and which for minutes at a time offer no human form for spectator identification: yet the latter must be supposed to remain intact in its deep structure, since at such moments the film *works* just as well as it does at others, and whole films (geographical documentaries, for example) unfold intelligibly in such conditions. – The second, more radical reason is that identification with the human form appearing on the screen, even when it occurs, still tells us nothing about the *place of the spectator's ego* in the inauguration of the signifier. As I have just pointed out, this ego is already formed. But since it exists, the question arises precisely of *where it is* during the projection of the film (the true primary identification, that of the mirror, forms the ego, but all other identifications presuppose, on the contrary, that it has been formed and can be 'exchanged' for the object or the fellow subject). Thus when I 'recognise' my like on the screen, and even more when I do not recognise it, where am I? Where is that someone who is capable of self-recognition when need be?

It is not enough to answer that the cinema, like every social practice, demands that the 'psychical apparatus of its participants be fully constituted, and that the question is thus the concern of general psychoanalytic theory and not of that of the cinema proper. For my *where is it?* does not claim to go so far, or more precisely tries to go slightly further: it is a question of the *point* occupied by this already constituted ego, occupied during the cinema showing and not in social life in general.

The spectator is absent from the screen: contrary to the child in the mirror, he cannot identify with himself as an object, but only with some objects which are there without him. In this sense the

screen is not a mirror. This time the perceived is entirely on the side of the object, and there is no longer any equivalent of the own image, of that unique mix of perceived and subject (of other and I) which was precisely the figure necessary to disengage the one from the other. At the cinema, it is always the other who is on the screen; as for me, I am there to look at him. I take no part in the perceived, on the contrary, I am *all-perceiving*. All-perceiving as one says all-powerful (this is the famous gift of 'ubiquity' the film makes its spectator); all-perceiving, too, because I am entirely on the side of the perceiving instance: absent from the screen, but certainly present in the auditorium, a great eye and ear without which the perceived would have no one to perceive it, the *constitutive* instance, in other words, of the cinema signifier (it is I who make the film). If the most extravagant spectacles and sounds or their most improbable assembly, the one most remote from all real experience, do not prevent the constitution of meaning (and to begin with do not *astonish* the spectator, do not really astonish him, not in spirit: he simply judges the film as strange) – that is because he knows he is at the cinema.

In the cinema the *subject's knowledge* takes a very precise form without which no film would be possible. This knowledge is dual (but unique). I know I am perceiving something imaginary (and that is why its absurdities, even if they are extreme, do not seriously disturb me), and I know that it is I who am perceiving it. This second knowledge divides in turn: I know that I am really perceiving, that my sense organs are physically affected, that I am not fantasising, that the fourth wall of the auditorium (the screen) is really different from the other three, that there is a projector facing it (and thus it is not I who am projecting, or at least not all alone) – and I also know that it is I who am perceiving all this, that this perceived-imaginary material is deposited in me as if on a second screen, that it is in me that it forms up into an organised sequence, that therefore I am myself the place where this really perceived imaginary accedes to the symbolic by its inauguration as the signifier of a certain type of institutionalised social activity called the 'cinema'.

In other words, the spectator *identifies with himself*, with himself as a pure act of perception (as wakefulness, alertness): as condition of possibility of the perceived and hence as a kind of transcendental subject, anterior to every *there is*.

A strange mirror, very like that of childhood, and very different. Very like, as Jean-Louis Baudry has emphasised (see p 17 above), because during the showing we are, like the child, in a sub-motor and super-perceptive state; because, like the child again, we are prey to the imaginary, the double, and are so paradoxically through a real perception. Very different, because this mirror returns us everything but ourselves, because we are wholly outside it, whereas the child is both in it and in front of it. As an *arrangement* (and

52 in a very topographical sense of the word), the cinema is more involved on the flank of the symbolic, and hence of secondariness, than is the mirror of childhood. This is not surprising, since it comes long after it, but what is more important to me is the fact that it is inscribed in its wake with as direct and as staggered an incidence without precise equivalent in other apparatuses of signification.

III.3 Identification with the camera

The preceding analysis coincides in places with others which have already been proposed and which I shall not repeat: analyses of quattrocento painting or of the cinema itself which insist on the role of monocular perspective (hence of the *camera*) and the 'vanishing point' that inscribes an empty emplacement for the spectator-subject, an all-powerful position which is that of God himself, or more broadly of some ultimate signified. And it is true that as he identifies with himself as look, the spectator can do no other than identify with the camera, too, which has looked before him at what he is now looking at and whose *post* (= framing) determines the vanishing point. During the projection this camera is absent, but it has a representative consisting of another apparatus, called precisely a 'projector'. An apparatus the spectator has behind him, *at the back of his head*,²⁴ that is, precisely where fantasy locates the 'focus' of all vision. All of us have experienced our own look, even outside the supposedly obscure chamber, as a kind of searchlight turning on the axis of our own necks (like a pan) and shifting when we shift (a tracking shot now): as a cone of light (without the microscopic dust scattered through it and streaking it in the cinema) whose vicariousness draws successive and variable slices of obscurity from nothing wherever and whenever it comes to rest. (And in a double sense that is what perception and consciousness are, a *light*, as Freud put it,²⁵ in the double sense of an illumination and an opening, as in the arrangement of the cinema, which contains both, a limited and fabulous light that only attains a small part of the real, but in return possesses the gift of

24. [*Derrière la tête* means 'at the back of one's mind' as well as 'behind one's head'.] See André Green: 'L'Ecran bi-face, un oeil derrière la tête,' *Psychanalyse et cinéma* n 1, January 1970 (no further issues appeared), pp 15-22. It will be clear that in the passage that follows my analysis coincides in places with that of André Green.

25. 'The Ego and the Id,' *Standard Edition*, op cit, Vol XIX, p 18; 'The Interpretation of Dreams,' *ibid*, Vol V, p 615 (= consciousness as a sense organ) and p 574 (= consciousness as a dual recording surface, internal and external); 'The Unconscious,' *ibid*, Vol XIV, p 171 (psychical processes are unconscious in themselves, consciousness is a function that *perceives* a small proportion of them), etc.

casting light on it.) Without this identification with the camera certain facts could not be understood, though they are constant ones: the fact, for example, that the spectator is not amazed when the image 'rotates' (= pan) and yet he knows he has not turned his head. The explanation is that he has no need to turn it really, he has turned it as the all-seeing, as identified with the movement of the camera, as a transcendental, not an empirical subject.

All vision consists of a double movement: projective (the 'sweeping' searchlight) and introjective: consciousness as a sensitive recording surface (as a screen). I have the impression at once that, to use a common expression, I am 'casting' my eyes on to things, and that the latter, thus illuminated, arrive to be deposited within me (we then declare that it is these things that have been 'projected', on to my retina, say). A sort of stream called the look, and explaining all the myths of magnetism, has to be pumped into the world, so that objects can come back up this stream in the opposite direction (but using it to find their way), arriving at last at our perception, which is now soft wax and no longer an emitting source.

The technology of photography carefully conforms to this fantasy accompanying perception, despite its banality. The camera is 'trained' on the object like a fire-arm (= projection) and the object arrives to make an imprint, a trace on the receptive surface of the film-strip (= introjection). The spectator himself does not escape these pinchers, for he is part of the apparatus, and also because pinchers, on the imaginary plane (Melanie Klein), mark our relation to the world as a whole and are rooted in the primary figures of orality. During the performance the spectator is the searchlight I have described, duplicating the projector, which itself duplicates the camera, and he is also the sensitive surface duplicating the screen, which itself duplicates the film-strip. There are two cones in the auditorium: one ending on the screen and starting both in the projection box and in the spectator's vision insofar as it is projective, and one starting from the screen and 'deposited' in the spectator's perception insofar as it is introjective (on the retina, a second screen). When I say that 'I see' the film, I mean thereby a unique mixture of two contrary currents: the film is what I receive, and it is also what I release, since it does not pre-exist my entering the auditorium and I only need close my eyes to suppress it. Releasing it, I am the projector, receiving it, I am the screen; in both these figures together, I am the camera, pointed yet recording.

Thus the constitution of the signifier in the cinema depends on a series of mirror-effects organised in a chain, and not on a single reduplication. In this the cinema as a topography resembles that other 'space' the technical equipment (camera, projector, film-strip, screen, etc), the objective precondition of the whole institution: as we know, the apparatuses too contain a series of mirrors, lenses, apertures and shutters, ground glasses, through which passes the cone of light: a further reduplication in which the equipment

54 becomes a metaphor (as well as the real source) for the mental process instituted. Further on we shall see that it is also its fetish.

In the cinema, as elsewhere, the constitution of the symbolic is only achieved through and above the play of the imaginary: projection-introjection, presence-absence, fantasies accompanying perception, etc. Even when acquired, the ego still depends in its underside on the fabulous figures thanks to which it has been acquired and which have marked it lastingly with the stamp of the lure. The secondary process does no more than 'cover' (and not always hermetically) the primary process which is still constantly present and conditions the very possibility of what covers it.

Chain of many mirrors, the cinema is at once a weak and a robust mechanism: like the human body, like a precision tool, like a social institution. Which is to say that it is really all of these at the same time.

And I, at this moment, what am I doing if not to add to all these reduplications one more whereby theory is attempting to set itself up? Am I not looking at myself looking at the film? This *passion for seeing* (and also hearing), the foundation of the whole edifice, am I not turning it, too, on (against) that edifice? Am I not still the voyeur I was in front of the screen, now that it is this voyeur who is being seen, thus postulating a second voyeur, the one writing at present, myself again?

III.4 On the idealist theory of the cinema

The place of the ego in the institution of the signifier, as transcendental yet radically deluded subject, since it is the institution (and even the equipment) that give it this place, surely provides us with an appreciable opportunity the better to understand and judge the precise epistemological import of the idealist theory of the cinema which culminates in the remarkable works of André Bazin. Before reflecting frontally on their validity, but simply reading texts of this kind, one cannot but be struck by the great precision, the acute and directly sensitive intelligence that they often demonstrate; at the same time they give the diffuse impression of a permanent ill-foundedness (which affects nothing and yet affects everything), they suggest that somewhere they contain something like a weak point at which the whole might be overturned.

It is certainly no accident that the main form of idealism in cinematic theory has been phenomenology. Bazin and other writers of the same period explicitly appealed to it, and more implicitly (but in a more generalised fashion) all conceptions of the cinema as a mystical revelation, as 'truth' or 'reality' unfolded by full right, as the apparition of what is (*l'étant*), as an epiphany, derive from it. We all know that the cinema has the gift of sending some of its lovers into prophetic trances. However, these cosmophanic

conceptions (which are not always expressed in an extreme form) register rather well the 'feeling' of the *deluded ego* of the spectator, they often give us excellent descriptions of this feeling and to this extent they are partly scientific and have advanced our knowledge of the cinema. But the *lure of the ego* is their blind spot. These theories are still of great interest, but they have, so to speak, to be put the other way round, as an optical image of the film.

For it is true that the topographical apparatus of the cinema resembles the conceptual apparatus of phenomenology, with the result that the latter can cast light on the former. (Besides, in any domain, a phenomenology of the object to be understood, a 'receptive' description of its appearances, must be the starting-point; only afterwards can *criticism* begin; psychoanalysts, it should be remembered, have their own phenomenology.) – The 'there is' of phenomenology proper (philosophical phenomenology) as an ontic revelation referring to a perceiving-subject (= 'perceptual *cogito*'), to a subject for which alone there can be anything, has close and precise affinities with the inauguration of the cinema signifier in the ego as I have tried to define it, with the spectator falling back on himself as a pure instance of perception, the whole of the perceived being 'over the way'. To this extent the cinema really is the 'phenomenological art' it has often been called, by Merleau-Ponty himself, for example ('The film and the new psychology', Lecture to the Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques, March 13, 1945, translated in *Sense and Non-sense*, North-Western University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1964, pp 48-59). But it can only be so because its objective determinations make it so. The ego's position in the cinema does not derive from a miraculous resemblance between the cinema and the natural characteristics of all perception; on the contrary, it is foreseen and marked in advance by the institution (the equipment, the disposition of the auditorium, the mental arrangement that internalises the two), and also by more general characteristics of the psychical apparatus (such as projection, the mirror structure, etc), which although they are less strictly dependent on a period of social history and a technology, by no means express the sovereignty of a 'human vocation', but are rather, inversely, shaped by certain specific features of man as an animal (as the only animal that is not an animal): his primitive *Hilfslosigkeit*, his dependence on another's care (the lasting source of the imaginary, of object relations, of the great oral figures of feeding), the motor prematurity of the child which condemns it to an initial self-recognition by sight (hence outside itself) anticipating a muscular unity it does not yet possess.

In other words, phenomenology can contribute to knowledge of the cinema (and it has done so) insofar as it happens to be like it, and yet it is on the cinema and phenomenology in their common illusion of *perceptual mastery* that light must be cast by the real conditions of society and man.

56 III.5 On some sub-codes of identification

The play of identification defines the cinematic situation in its generality, ie *the* code. But it also allows more specific and less permanent configurations, 'variations' on it, as it were; they intervene in certain coded figures which occupy precise segments of precise films.

What I have said about identification so far amounts to the statement that the spectator is absent from the screen *as perceived*, but he is also (the two things inevitably go together) present there and even 'all-present' *as perceiver*. At every moment I am in the film by my look's caress. This presence often remains diffuse, geographically undifferentiated, evenly distributed over the whole surface of the screen; or more precisely *hovering*, like the psychoanalyst's listening, ready to catch on preferentially to some motif in the film, according to the force of that motif and according to my own fantasies as a spectator, without the cinematic code itself intervening to govern this anchorage and impose it on the whole audience. But in other cases, certain articles of the cinematic codes or sub-codes (which I shall not try to survey completely here) are made responsible for suggesting to the spectator the vector along which his permanent identification with his own look should be extended temporarily inside the film (the perceived) itself. Here we meet various classic problems of cinematic theory, or at least certain aspects of them: subjective images, out-of-frame space, looks (looks and no longer the look, but the former are articulated to the latter). Nicholas Browne's article 'Rhétorique du texte spéculaire (à propos de *Stagecoach*)' in *Communications* n 23 op cit makes what seems to me an interesting contribution here.

There are various sorts of subjective image and I have tried elsewhere (following Jean Mitry) to distinguish between them (see section 2 of 'Current Problems of Film Theory', *Screen* v 14 nn 1/2, Spring/Summer 1973, pp 45-9). Only one of them will detain me for the moment, the one which 'expresses the viewpoint of the film-maker' in the standard formula (and not the viewpoint of a character, another traditional sub-case of the subjective image): unusual framings, uncommon shot-angles, etc, as for example in one of the sketches which make up Julien Duvivier's film *Le Carnet de bal* (the sketch with Pierre Blanchard, shot continuously in tilted framings). In the standard definitions one thing strikes me: I do not see why these uncommon angles should express the viewpoint of the film-maker any more than perfectly ordinary angles, closer to the horizontal. However, the definition is comprehensible even in its inaccuracy: precisely because it is uncommon, the uncommon angle makes us more aware of what we had merely forgotten to some extent in its absence: an identification with the camera (with 'the author's viewpoint'). The ordinary framings are finally felt to be non-framings: I espouse the film-maker's look (without which no cinema would be possible), but my consciousness is not too aware

of it. The uncommon angle reawakens me and (like the cure) 57 teaches me what I already knew. And then, it obliges my look to stop wandering freely over the screen for the moment and to scan it along more precise lines of force which are imposed on me. Thus for a moment I become directly aware of the *emplacement* of my own presence-absence in the film simply because it has changed.

Now for looks. In a fiction film, the characters look at one another. As it happens (and this is already another 'notch' in the chain of identifications) a character looks at another who is momentarily out-of-frame, or else is looked at by him. If we have gone one notch further, this is because everything out-of-frame *brings us closer to the spectator*, since it is the peculiarity of the latter to be out-of-frame (the out-of-frame character thus has a point in common with him: he is looking at the screen). In certain cases the out-of-frame character's look is 'reinforced' by recourse to another variant of the subjective image, generally christened the 'character's point of view': the framing of the scene corresponds precisely to the angle from which the out-of-frame character looks at the screen. (The two figures are dissociable moreover; we often know that the scene is being looked at by someone other than ourselves, by a character, but it is the logic of the plot, or an element of the dialogue, or a previous image that tells us so, not the position of the camera, which may be very far from the presumed emplacement of the out-of-frame onlooker.)

In all sequences of this kind, the identification that founds the signifier is *twice relayed*, doubly duplicated in a circuit that leads it to the heart of the film along a line which is no longer hovering, which follows the inclination of the looks and is therefore governed by the film itself: the spectator's look (= the basic identification), before dispersing all over the surface of the screen in a variety of intersecting lines (= looks of the characters in the frame = second duplication), must first 'go through' – in the same way as an itinerary or a strait are gone through – the look of the character out-of-frame (= first duplication), himself a spectator and hence the first delegate of the true spectator, but not to be confused with the latter since he is inside, if not the frame, then at least the fiction. This invisible character, supposed (like the spectator) to be seeing, will collide obliquely with the latter's look and play the part of an obligatory intermediary. By offering himself as a crossing for the spectator, he inflects the circuit followed by the sequence of identifications and it is only in this sense that he is himself seen: as we see through him, we see ourselves not seeing him.

Examples of this kind are much more numerous and each of them is much more complex than I have described them here. At this point textual analysis of precise film sequences is an indispensable instrument of knowledge. I just wished to show that in the end

58 there is no break in continuity between the child's game with the mirror and, at the other extreme, certain localised figures of the cinematic codes. The mirror is the site of primary identification. Identification with one's own look is secondary with respect to the mirror, ie for a general theory of adult activities, but it is the foundation of the cinema and hence primary when the latter is under discussion: it is *primary cinematic identification* proper ('primary identification' would be inaccurate from the psycho-analytic point of view; 'secondary identification', more accurate in this respect, would be ambiguous for a cinematic psycho-analysis). As for identifications with characters, with their own different levels (out-of-frame character, etc), they are secondary, tertiary cinematic identifications, etc; taken as a whole in opposition to the simple identification of the spectator with his own look, they constitute together secondary cinematic identification, in the singular (on these problems, see Michel Colin: *Le film: transformation du texte du roman*, Mémoire de troisième cycle, 1974, to be published).

Freud noted, vis-à-vis the sexual act ('Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety,' *Standard Edition*, op cit, Vol XX, pp 87-8), that the most ordinary practices depend on a large number of psychical functions which are distinct but work consecutively, so that all of them must be intact if what is regarded as a normal performance is to be possible (it is because neurosis and psychosis dissociate them and put some of them out of court that a kind of commutation is made possible whereby they can be sorted out retrospectively by the analyst). The apparently very simple act of *seeing a film* is no exception to this rule. As soon as it is subjected to analysis it reveals to us a complex, multiply interconnected imbrication of the functions of the imaginary, the real and the symbolic, which is also required in one form or another for every procedure of social life, but whose cinematic manifestation is especially impressive since it is played out on a small surface. (To this extent the theory of the cinema may some day contribute something to psychoanalysis, even if, through force of circumstances, this 'reciprocation' remains very limited at the moment, the two disciplines being very unevenly developed.)

In order to understand the fiction film, I must both 'take myself' for the character (= imaginary procedure) so that he benefits, by analogical projection, from all the schemata of intelligibility that I have within me, and not take myself for him (= return to the real) so that the fiction can be established as such (= as symbolic): this is *seeming-real*. – Similarly, in order to understand the film (at all), I must perceive the photographed object as absent, its photograph as present, and the presence of this absence as signifying. The imaginary of the cinema presupposes the symbolic, for the spectator

must first of all have known the primordial mirror. But as the latter 59
instituted the ego very largely in the imaginary, the second mirror
of the screen, a symbolic apparatus, itself in turn depends on
reflection and lack. However, it is not fantasy, a 'purely' symbolic-
imaginary site, for the absence of the object and the codes of that
absence are really produced in it by the *physis* of an equipment:
the cinema is a body (a *corpus* for the semiologist), a fetish that
can be loved.

IV The Passion for perceiving

Cinema practice is only possible through the perceptual passions:
the desire to see (= scopic drive, scopophilia, voyeurism), acting
alone in the art of the silent film, the desire to hear which has been
added to it in the sound cinema (this is the '*pulsion invocante*' the
invoking drive, one of the four main sexual drives for Lacan – see
Le Séminaire tome XI: *Les Quatre concepts fondamentaux de la*
psychanalyse, Editions du Seuil, Paris 1973, especially pp 164 and
178; it is well known that Freud isolated it less clearly and hardly
deals with it as such).

These two sexual drives are distinguished from the others in that
they are more dependent on a lack, or at least dependent on it
in a more precise, more unique manner, which marks them from
the outset, even more than the others, as on the side of the
imaginary.

However, this characteristic is to a greater or lesser degree proper
to all the sexual drives insofar as they differ from purely organic
instincts or needs (Lacan), or in Freud from the self-preservation
drives (the 'ego drives' which he tended subsequently to annex to
narcissism, a tendency he could never quite bring himself to pursue
to its conclusion). The sexual drive does not have so stable and
strong a relationship with its 'object' as do for example hunger
and thirst. Hunger can only be satisfied by food, but food is quite
certain to satisfy it; thus instincts are simultaneously more and less
difficult to satisfy than drives; they depend on a perfectly real
object that cannot be deputised, but they depend on nothing else.
Drives, on the contrary, can be satisfied up to a point outside their
objects (this is sublimation, or else, in another way, masturbation)
and are initially capable of doing without them without putting the
organism into immediate danger (hence repression). The needs of
self-preservation can neither be repressed nor sublimated; the sexual
drives are more labile and more accommodating, as Freud insisted²⁶

26. 'Repression,' *Standard Edition*, op cit, Vol XIV, pp 146-7; 'Instincts
and their Vicissitudes,' *ibid*, pp 122 and 134n; 'The Ego and the
Id,' *ibid*, Vol XIX, p 30; 'On Narcissism: an Introduction,' *ibid*,
Vol XIV, p 94, etc.

60 (more radically perverse, says Lacan).²⁷ Inversely, they always remain more or less unsatisfied, even when their object has been attained; desire is very quickly reborn after the brief vertigo of its apparent extinction, it is largely sustained by itself as desire, it has its own rhythms, often quite independent of those of the pleasure obtained (which seemed nonetheless its specific aim); the lack is what it wishes to fill, and at the same time what it is always careful to leave gaping, in order to survive as desire. In the end it has no object, at any rate no real object; through real objects which are all substitutes (and all the more multiple and interchangeable for that), it pursues an imaginary object (a 'lost object') which is its truest object, an object that has always been lost and is always desired as such.

How, then, can one say that the visual and auditory drives have a stronger or more special relationship with the absence of their object, with the infinite pursuit of the imaginary? Because, as opposed to other sexual drives, the 'perceiving drive' – combining into one the scopic drive and the invoking drive – *concretely represents the absence of its object in the distance at which it maintains it and which is part of its very definition: distance of the look, distance of listening*. Psychophysiology makes a classic distinction between the 'senses at a distance' (sight and hearing) and the others all of which are exchanges between immediate neighbours and which it calls 'senses of contact' (Pradines): touch, taste, smell, coenaesthetic sense, etc. Freud notes that voyeurism, like sadism in this respect, always keeps apart the *object* (here the object looked at) and the *source* of the drive, ie the generative organ (the eye); the voyeur does not look at his eye ('Instincts and their Vicissitudes', *Standard Edition*, op cit, Vol XIV, pp 129-30). With orality and anality, on the contrary, the exercise of the drive inaugurates a certain degree of partial fusion, coincidence (= contact, tendential abolition of distance) of source and aim, for the aim is to obtain pleasure at the level of the source organ (= 'organ pleasure' – *ibid*, p 138): eg what is called 'mouth pleasure' (see Lacan: *Le Séminaire* tome XI, op cit, p 153).

It is no accident that the main socially acceptable arts are based on the senses at a distance, and that those which depend on the senses of contact are often regarded as 'minor' arts (= culinary arts, art of perfumes, etc). Nor is it an accident that the visual or auditory imaginaries have played a more important part in the histories of societies than the tactile or olfactory imaginaries.

The voyeur is very careful to maintain a gulf, an empty space, between the object and the eye, the object and his own body: his

27. More precisely: lending themselves through their peculiar characteristics to a perversion which is not the drive itself, but the subject's position with respect to it (*Le Séminaire*, tome XI, op cit, pp 165-6). Remember that for Freud as well as for Lacan, the drive is always 'componential' (the child is polymorphously perverse, etc).

look fastens the object at the right distance, as with those cinema spectators who take care to avoid being too close to or too far from the screen. The voyeur represents in space the fracture which for ever separates him from the object; he represents his very dissatisfaction (which is precisely what he needs as a voyeur), and thus also his 'satisfaction' insofar as it is of a specifically voyeuristic type. To fill in this distance would threaten to overwhelm the subject, to bring him to orgasm and the pleasure of his own body, hence to the exercise of other drives, mobilising the senses of contact and putting an end to the scopic arrangement. *Retention* is fully part of perceptual pleasure, which is thereby often coloured with anality. Orgasm is the object rediscovered in a state of momentary illusion; it is the fantasy suppression of the gap between object and subject (hence the amorous myths of 'fusion'). The looking drive, except when it is exceptionally well developed, is less directly related to orgasm than are the other component drives; it favours it by its excitatory action, but it is not generally sufficient to produce it by its figures alone, which thus belong to the realm of 'preparatives'. In it we do not find that illusion, however brief, of a lack filled, of a non-imaginary, of a full relation to the object, better established in other drives. If it is true of all desire that it depends on the infinite pursuit of its absent object, voyeuristic desire, along with certain forms of sadism, is the only desire whose principle of distance symbolically and spatially evokes this fundamental rent.

The same could be said, making the necessary modifications of course, about the invoking (auditory) drive, less closely studied by psychoanalysis hitherto, with the exception of writers like Lacan and Guy Rosolato. I shall merely recall that of all hallucinations – and what reveals the dissociation of desire and real object better than the hallucination? – the main ones by far are visual and auditory hallucinations, those of the senses at a distance (this is also true of the dream, another form of hallucination).

However, although this set of features seems to me to be important, it does not yet characterise the signifier of the cinema proper, but rather that of all means of expression based on sight or hearing, and hence, among other 'languages', of practically all the arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, music, opera, theatre, etc). What distinguishes the cinema is an extra reduplication, a supplementary and specific turn to the screw bolting desire to the lack. First because the spectacles and sounds the cinema 'offers' us (offers us at a distance, hence as much *steals* from us) are especially rich and varied here: a mere difference of degree, but already one that counts: the screen presents to our apprehension, but absents from our grasp, more 'things'. (The mechanism of the perceiving drive is identical for the moment but its object is more endowed with

62 matter; this is one of the reasons why the cinema is very suitable for handling 'erotic scenes' which depend on direct, non-sublimated voyeurism.) In the second place (and more decisive), the specific affinity between the cinematic signifier and the imaginary persists when film is compared with arts such as the theatre in which the audio-visual given is as rich as it is on the screen in the number of perceptual axes involved. Indeed, the theatre really does 'give' this given, or at least slightly more really: it is physically present, in the same space as the spectator. The cinema only gives it in effigy, inaccessible from the outset, in a primordial *elsewhere*, infinitely desirable (= never possessible), on another scene which is that of absence and which nonetheless represents the absent in detail, thus making it very present, but by a different itinerary. Not only am I at a distance from the object, as in the theatre, but what remains in that distance is now no longer the object itself, it is a delegate it has sent me while itself withdrawing. A double withdrawal.

What defines the specifically cinematic *scopic regime* is not so much the distance kept, the 'keeping' itself (first figure of the lack, common to all voyeurism), as the absence of the object seen. Here the cinema is profoundly different from the theatre as also from more intimate voyeuristic activities with a specifically erotic aim (there are intermediate genres, moreover: certain cabaret acts, striptease, etc): cases where voyeurism remains linked to exhibitionism, where the two faces, active and passive, of the component drive are by no means so dissociated; where the object seen is present and hence presumably complicit; where the perverse activity – aided if need be by a certain dose of bad faith and happy illusion, varying from case to case, moreover, and sometimes reducible to very little, as in true perverse couples – is rehabilitated and reconciled with itself by being as it were undividedly taken in charge by two actors assuming its constitutive poles (the corresponding fantasies, in the absence of the actions, thus becoming interchangeable and shared by the play of reciprocal identification). In the theatre, as in domestic voyeurism, the passive actor (the one seen), simply because he is bodily present, because he does not go away, is presumed to consent, to cooperate deliberately. It may be that he really does, as exhibitionists in the clinical sense do, or as, in a sublimated fashion, does that oft noted triumphant exhibitionism characteristic of theatrical acting, counterposed even by Bazin to cinematic representation. It may also be that the object seen has only accepted this condition (thus becoming an 'object' in the ordinary sense of the word, and no longer in the Freudian sense) under the pressure of more or less powerful external constraints, economic ones for example with certain poor strippers. (However, they must have consented at some point; rarely is the degree of acceptance zero, except in the case of *victimisation*, eg when a fascist militia strips its prisoners: the specific characteristics of the *scopic arrangements* are then distorted by the over powerful intervention of another

element, sadism.) Voyeurism which is not too sadistic (there is none which is not so at all) rests on a kind of *fiction*, more or less justified in the order of the real, sometimes institutionalised as in the theatre or strip-tease, a fiction that stipulates that the object 'agrees', that it is therefore exhibitionist. Or more precisely, what is necessary in this fiction for the establishment of potency and desire is presumed to be sufficiently guaranteed by the physical presence of the object: 'Since it is there, it must like it', such, hypocritical or no, deluded or no, is the retrenchment needed by the voyeur so long as sadistic infiltrations are insufficient to make the object's refusal and constraint necessary to him. – Thus, despite the distance inaugurated by the look – which transforms the object into a *picture* (a '*tableau vivant*')²⁸ and thus tips it over into the imaginary, even in its real presence – that presence which persists and the active consent which is its real or mythical correlate (but always real as myth) re-establish in the scopic space, momentarily at least, the illusion of a fullness of the object relation, of a state of desire which is not just imaginary.

It is this last recess that is attacked by the cinema signifier, it is in its precise emplacement (*in its place*, in both senses of the word) that it installs a new figure of the lack, the physical absence of the object seen. In the theatre, actors and spectators are present at the same time and in the same location, hence present one to another, as the two protagonists of an authentic perverse couple. But in the cinema, the actor was present when the spectator was not (= shooting), and the spectator is present when the actor is no longer (= projection): a failure to meet of the voyeur and the exhibitionist whose approaches no longer coincide (they have 'missed' one another). The cinema's voyeurism must (of necessity) do without any very clear mark of consent on the part of the object. There is no equivalent here of the theatre actors' final 'bow'. And then the latter could see their voyeurs, the game was less unilateral, slightly better distributed. In the darkened hall, the voyeur is really left alone (with other voyeurs, which is worse), deprived of his other half in the mythical hermaphrodite (a hermaphrodite not necessarily constituted by the distribution of the sexes but rather by that of the active and passive poles in the exercise of the drive). Yet still a voyeur, since there is something to see, called the film, but something in whose definition there is a great deal of 'flight': not precisely something that hides, rather something that *lets* itself be seen without *presenting* itself to be seen, which has gone out of the room before leaving only its trace visible there. This is the origin in particular of that 'recipe' of the classical cinema that the actor should never look directly at the audience (= the camera).

28. See the paragraph with this title in Jean-François Lyotard's article 'L'acinéma,' *Cinéma: Théories, Lectures, Revue d'esthétique* nn 2/3/4, 1973, pp 357-69.

64 Thus deprived of rehabilitatory agreement, of a real or supposed consensus with the other (which was also the Other, for it had the status of a sanction on the plane of the symbolic), cinematic voyeurism, *unauthorised* scopophilia, is from the outset more strongly established than that of the theatre in direct line from the primal scene. Certain precise features of the institution contribute to this affinity: the obscurity surrounding the onlooker, the aperture of the screen with its inevitable keyhole effect. But the affinity is more profound. It lies first in the spectator's solitude in the cinema: those attending a cinematic projection do not, as in the theatre, constitute a true 'audience', a temporary collectivity; they are an accumulation of individuals who, despite appearances, more closely resemble the fragmented group of readers of a novel. It lies on the other hand in the fact that the filmic spectacle, the object seen, is more radically ignorant of its spectator, since he is not there, than the theatrical spectacle can ever be. A third factor, closely linked to the other two, also plays a part: the *segregation of spaces* that characterises a cinema performance and not a theatrical one. The 'stage' and the auditorium are no longer two polar selections made in a single space; the space of the film, represented by the screen, is utterly heterogeneous, it no longer communicates with that of the auditorium: one is real, the other perspective: a stronger break than any line of footlights. For its spectator the film unfolds in that simultaneously quite close and definitively inaccessible 'elsewhere' in which the child *sees* the gambols of the parental couple, who are similarly ignorant of it and leave it alone, a pure onlooker whose participation is inconceivable. In this respect the cinematic signifier is Œdipal in type.

In the set of differences between the cinema and the theatre, it is difficult to be precise about the relative importance of two sorts of conditioning facts, and yet they are definitely distinct: on the one hand the characteristics of the signifier (alone envisaged here), ie the supplementary degree of absence that I have analysed, and on the other the socio-ideological circumstances that have marked the historical birth of the two arts in a divergent manner. I have broached the latter topic elsewhere in my contribution to the *Hommage à Emile Benveniste*, and I shall only recall that the cinema was born in the midst of the capitalist epoch in a largely antagonistic and fragmented society, based on individualism and the restricted family (= father-mother-children), in an especially super-egotistic bourgeois society, especially concerned with 'elevation' (or façade), especially opaque to itself. The theatre is a very ancient art, one which saw the light in more authentically ceremonial societies, in more integrated human groups (even if sometimes, as in Ancient Greece, the cost of this integration was the rejection into a non-human exterior of a whole social category, that of the slaves),

in cultures which were in some sense closer to their desire (= paganism): the theatre retains something of this deliberate civic tendency towards ludico-liturgical 'communion', even in the degraded state of a worldly rendez-vous around those plays known as '*pièces de boulevard*' (variety plays).

It is for reasons of this kind too that theatrical voyeurism, less cut off from its exhibitionist correlate, tends more towards a reconciled and community-orientated practice of the scopic perversion (of the component drive). Cinematic voyeurism is less accepted, more 'shame-faced'.

But there are not just the global determinations (by the signifier or by history). there are also the personal efforts of the writers, producers and actors. Like all general tendencies, the ones I have signalled are unevenly manifest from work to work. There is no need to be surprised that certain films accept their own voyeurism more plainly than do certain plays. It is at this point that the problems of political cinema and political theatre should be posed, and also those of a politics of the cinema and the theatre. The militant use of the two signifiers is by no means identical. In this respect the theatre is clearly at a great advantage, thanks to its 'lesser degree of imaginairiness', thanks to the direct contact it allows with the audience. The film which aims to be a film of intervention must take this into account in its self-definition. As we know, this is by no means easy.

The difficulty also lies in the fact that cinematic scopophilia, which is 'non-authorised' in the sense I have just pointed out, is authorised however by the mere fact of its institutionalisation. The cinema retains something of the peculiar prohibited character of the vision of the primal scene (the latter is always surprised, never contemplated at leisure, and the permanent cinemas of big cities, with their highly anonymous clientele entering or leaving furtively, in the dark, in the middle of the action, represent this transgression factor rather well) — but also, in a kind of inverse movement which is simply the 'reprise' of the imaginary by the symbolic, the cinema is based on the legalisation and generalisation of the prohibited practice. Thus it shares in miniature in the special regime of certain activities (such as the frequentation of '*maisons de tolérance*', very well named in this respect) that are both official and clandestine, and in which neither of these two characteristics ever quite succeeds in obliterating the other. For the vast majority of the audience, the cinema (rather like the dream in this) represents a kind of enclosure or 'reserve' which escapes a fully social life although it is accepted and prescribed by it: going to the cinema is one licit activity among others with its place in the admissible pastimes of the day or the week, and yet that place is a 'hole' in the social cloth, a *loophole* opening on to something slightly more crazy, slightly less approved

Cinema and theatre do not have the same relation to fiction. There is a fictional cinema, just as there is a fictional theatre, a 'non-fiction' cinema just as there is a non-fiction theatre, because fiction is a great historical and social figure (particularly active in our Western tradition and perhaps in others), endowed with a force of its own which leads it to invest various signifiers (and inversely, to be more or less expelled from them on occasion). It does not follow that these signifiers have an even and uniform affinity with it (that of music, after all, is especially repugnant to it, yet there is such a thing as programme music). The cinematic signifier lends itself the better to fiction in that it is itself fictive and 'absent'. Attempts to 'defictionalise' the spectacle, notably since Brecht, have gone further in the theatre than in the cinema, and not by chance.

But what interests me here is rather the fact that this unevenness is still apparent if only the fictional theatre is compared with the fictional cinema. They are not 'fictional' in quite the same way, and it was this that I had been struck by in 1965 when I compared the 'impression of reality' produced by these two forms of spectacle ('On the Impression of Reality in the Cinema,' *Essais sur la signification au cinéma* tome I, Klincksieck, Paris 1968; translated as *Film Language*, OUP, New York 1974). At that time my approach was a purely phenomenological one, and it owed very little to psychoanalysis. However, the latter confirms me in my earlier opinion. Underlying all fiction there is the dialectical relationship between a real instance and an imaginary instance, the former's job being to *mimic* the latter: there is the representation, involving real materials and actions, and the represented, the fictional properly speaking. But the balance established between these two poles and hence the precise nuance of the *regime of credence* that the spectator will adopt varies tolerably from one fictional technique to the other. In the cinema as in the theatre, the represented is by definition imaginary; that is what characterises fiction as such, independently of the signifiers in charge of it. But the representation is fully real in the theatre, whereas in the cinema it too is imaginary, the material being already a reflection. Thus the theatrical fiction is experienced more – it is only a matter of a different 'dosage', of a difference of economy, rather, but that is precisely why it is important – as a set of real pieces of behaviour actively directed at the evocation of something unreal, whereas cinematic fiction is rather experienced as the quasi-real presence of that unreal itself; the signifier, already imaginary in its own way, is less palpably so, it plays more into the hands of the diegesis, it tends more to be swallowed up by it, to be credited to its side of the balance-sheet by the spectator. The

balance is established slightly closer to the represented, slightly further from the representation. 67

For the same reason, fictional theatre tends to depend more on the actor (representer), fictional cinema more on the character (represented). This difference has often been emphasised by the theory of the cinema, where it constitutes an already classical theme. In the psychoanalytic field it has also been noted, by Octave Mannoni in particular (see 'L'illusion comique en le théâtre du point de vue de l'imaginaire' in *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'autre scène*, Editions du Seuil, Paris 1969, p 180). Even when the cinema spectator does identify with the actor rather than with the part (somewhat as he does in the theatre), it is with the actor as 'star', ie still as a character, and a fabulous one, itself fictional: with the best of his parts.

It may be said that there are much simpler reasons for this difference, that in the theatre the same part can be interpreted by various actors from one production to another, that the actor thus becomes 'detached' from the character, whereas in the cinema there are never several productions (several 'casts') for one film, so the part and its unique interpreter are definitively associated with one another. This is quite true, and it does affect the very different balance of forces between actor and character in theatre and cinema. But it is not a 'simple' fact, nor is it independent of the distance between their respective signifiers, on the contrary, it is but one aspect of that distance (merely a very striking one). If the theatrical part can have a variety of interpreters, that is because its representation is real and mobilises really present (and hence possibly variant) persons each evening. If the cinematic part is fastened once and for all to its interpreter, it is because its representation involves the reflection of the actor, not the actor himself, and because the reflection (the signifier) is *recorded* and hence can no longer vary.

V Disavowal, fetishism

As can be seen, the cinema has a number of roots in the unconscious and in the great movements illuminated by psychoanalysis, but they can all be traced back to the specific characteristics of the institutionalised signifier. I have gone a little way in tracing some of these roots, that of mirror identification, that of voyeurism and exhibitionism. There is also a third, that of fetishism.

Since the famous article by Freud that inaugurated the problem ('Fetishism', 1927, *Standard Edition*, op cit Vol XXI, pp 152-7),²⁹ psychoanalysis has linked fetish and fetishism closely with

29. See also Octave Mannoni's important study, 'Je sais bien, mais quand même . . .', in *Clefs pour l'imaginaire*, op cit.

68 castration and the fear it inspires. Castration, for Freud, and even more clearly for Lacan, is first of all the mother's castration, and that is why the main figures it inspires are to a certain degree common to children of both sexes. The child who sees its mother's body is constrained by way of perception, by the 'evidence of the senses', to accept that there are human beings deprived of a penis. But for a long time – and somewhere-in it for ever – it will not interpret this inevitable observation in terms of an anatomical difference between the sexes (= penis/vagina). It believes that all human beings originally have a penis and it therefore understands what it has seen as the effect of a mutilation which redoubles its fear that it will be subjected to a similar fate (or else, in the case of the little girl after a certain age, the fear that she has already been subjected to it). Inversely, it is this very terror that is projected on to the spectacle of the mother's body, and invites the reading of an absence where anatomy sees a different conformation. The scenario of castration, in its broad lines, does not differ whether one understands it, like Lacan, as an essentially symbolic drama in which castration takes over in a decisive metaphor all the losses, both real and imaginary, that the child has already suffered (birth trauma, maternal breast, excrement, etc), or on the contrary one tends, like Freud, to take that scenario slightly more literally. Before this *unveiling of a lack* (we are already close to the cinema signifier), the child, in order to avoid too strong an anxiety, will have to double up its belief (another cinematic characteristic) and from then on for ever hold two contradictory opinions (proof that the real perception has not been without effect for all that): 'All human beings are endowed with a penis' (primal belief) and 'Some human beings are deprived of a penis' (evidence of the senses). In other words, it will, perhaps definitively, retain its former belief *beneath* the new ones, but it will also hold to its new perceptual observation while *disavowing* it on another level (= denial of perception, disavowal, Freud's '*Verleugnung*'). Thus is established the lasting matrix, the affective prototype of all the splittings of belief which man will henceforth be capable of in the most varied domains, of all the infinitely complex unconscious and occasionally conscious interactions which he will allow himself between 'believing' and 'not believing' and which will on more than one occasion be of great assistance to him in resolving (or denying) delicate problems. (If we are all a little honest with ourselves, we will realise that a truly integral belief, without any 'underside' in which the opposite is believed, would make even the most ordinary everyday life almost impossible.)

At the same time, the child, terrified by what it has seen or glimpsed, will be tempted, more or less successfully in different cases, to *arrest* its look, for all its life, at what will subsequently become its fetish: at a piece of clothing, for example, which

masks the frightening discovery, or else precedes it (underwear, stockings, boots, etc). The fixation on this 'just before' is thus another form of disavowal, of retreat from the perceived, although its very existence is dialectical evidence of the fact that the perceived has been perceived. The fetishistic prop will become a precondition for the establishment of potency and access to orgasm (*jouissance*), sometimes an indispensable precondition (true fetishism); in other developments it will only be a favourable condition, and one whose weight will vary with respect to the other features of the erotogenic situation as a whole. (It can be observed once again that the defence against desire itself becomes erotic, as the defence against anxiety itself becomes anxiogenic; for an analogous reason: what arises 'against' an affect also arises 'in' it and is not easily separated from it, even if that is its aim.) Fetishism is generally regarded as the 'perversion' par excellence, for it intervenes itself in the 'tabulation' of the others, and above all because they, like it (and this is what makes it their model), are based on the avoidance of castration. The fetish always represents the penis, it is always a substitute for it, whether metaphorically (= it masks its absence) or metonymically (= it is contiguous with its empty place). To sum up, the fetish signifies the penis as absent, it is its negative signifier; supplementing it, it puts a 'fullness' in place of a lack, but in doing so it also affirms that lack. It resumes within it the structure of disavowal and multiple belief.

These few reminders are intended above all to emphasise the fact that the dossier of fetishism, before any examination of its cinematic extensions, contains two broad aspects which coincide in their depths (in childhood and in structure) but are relatively distinct in their concrete manifestations: these are the problems of belief (= disavowal) and that of the fetish itself, the latter more immediately linked to direct or sublimated erotogenicity.

I shall say very little about the problems of belief in the cinema. First because they are at the centre of my article in *Communications* n 23 op cit. Second because I have already discussed them in this one vis-à-vis identification and the mirror (section III): I have tried to describe, outside the special case of fiction, a few of the many and successive *twists*, the 'reversals' (reduplications) that occur in the cinema to articulate together the imaginary, the symbolic and the real; each of these twists presupposes a division of belief; in order to work, the film does not only require a splitting, but a whole series of stages of belief, imbricated together into a chain by a remarkable machinery. – In the third place, because the subject has already been largely dealt with by Octave Mannoni in his remarkable studies of the theatrical illusion ('L'illusion comique en le théâtre du point de vue de l'imaginaire,' op cit), vis-à-vis the fictional theatre. Of course, I have said above that theatrical fiction

70 and cinematic fiction are not fictional in the same way; but this deviation concerned the representation, the signifying material, not the represented, ie the fiction-fact as such, in which the deviation is much smaller (at any rate so long as one is dealing with *spectacles* such as theatre and cinema – written fiction obviously presents somewhat different problems). Mannoni's analyses are just as valid for the fiction film, with the single reservation that the divergences in representation that I have already discussed (at the end of section IV) are borne in mind.

I shall rest content to adapt these analyses to a cinematic perspective, and not feel obliged to repeat them (not so well) in detail. – It is understood that the audience is not duped by the diegetic illusion, it 'knows' that the screen presents no more than a fiction. And yet, it is of vital importance for the correct unfolding of the spectacle that this make-believe be scrupulously respected (or else the fiction film is declared 'poorly made'), that everything is set to work to make the deception effective and to give it an air of truth (this is the problem of *verisimilitude*). Any spectator will tell you that he 'doesn't believe in it', but everything happens as if there were nonetheless someone to be deceived, someone who really will 'believe in it'. (I shall say that behind any fiction there is a second fiction: the diegetic events are fictional, that is the first; but everyone pretends to believe they are true, and that is the second.) In other words, asks Mannoni, since it is 'accepted' that the audience is incredulous, *who is it who is credulous* and must be maintained in his credulousness by the perfect organisation of the machinery (of the machination)? This credulous person is, of course, another part of ourselves, he is still seated *beneath* the incredulous one, or in his heart, it is he who continues to believe, who disavows what he knows (he for whom all human beings are still endowed with a penis). But by a symmetrical and simultaneous movement, the incredulous disavows the credulous: no one will admit that he is duped by the 'plot'. That is why the instance of credulousness is often projected into the outer world and constituted as a separate person, a person completely abused by the diegesis: thus in Corneille's *L'illusion comique*, a play with a significant title, the character Pridament, the *naïf*, who does not know what theatre is, and *for whom*, by a reversal foreseen in Corneille's plot itself, the representation of the play is given. By a partial identification with this character, the spectators can sustain their credulousness in all incredulousness. This instance which believes and also its personified projection have fairly precise equivalents in the cinema: for example, the credulous spectators at the 'Grand Café' in 1895, frequently and complacently evoked by the incredulous spectators who have come *later* (and are no longer children), those spectators of 1895 who fled their seats in terror when the train entered La Ciotat station (in Lumière's famous film), because they were afraid it would run them down. Or else, in so many films, the character

of the 'dreamer' – the sleeping dreamer – who during the film believed (as we did!) that it was true, whereas it was he who saw it all in a dream and who wakes up at the end of the film (as we do again). Octave Mannoni compares these switches of belief with those the ethnologist observes in certain populations in which his informers regularly declare that 'once the masks were believed in' (these masks are used to deceive children, like our Father Christmas, and adolescents learn at their initiation ceremonies that the 'masks' were in fact adults in disguise); in other words, these societies have always 'believed' in the masks, but have always rejected this belief into a 'once-upon-a-time': they still believe in them, but always in the aorist tense (like everyone). This once-upon-a-time is childhood, when one really was duped by the masks; among adults, the beliefs of once-upon-a-time irrigate the unbelief of today, but irrigate it by denegation (one could say: *by delegation*, by rejecting credence on to the child and on to former times).

Certain cinematic sub-codes inscribe disavowal into the film according to less permanent and more localised figures. They should be studied separately in this perspective. I am not thinking only of films which have been 'dreamt' in their entirety by one of their characters, but also of all the sequences accompanied by a 'voice-off' commentary, spoken sometimes by a character, sometimes by a kind of anonymous 'speaker'. This voice, precisely a voice 'off', beyond jurisdiction, represents the rampart of unbelief (hence it is the opposite of the Pridament character, yet has the same effect in the last analysis). The distance it establishes between the action and ourselves comforts our feeling that we are not duped by that action: thus reassured (behind the rampart), we can allow ourselves to be duped by it a bit longer (it is the speciality of naive distanciations to resolve themselves into alibis). – There are also all those 'films within a film' which downgear the mechanism of our belief-unbelief and anchor it in several stages, hence more strongly: the included film was an illusion, so the including film (the film as such) was not, or was so somewhat less.³⁰

As for the fetish itself, in its cinematic manifestations, who could fail to see that it consists fundamentally of the equipment of the cinema (= its 'technique'), or of the cinema as a whole as equipment and as technique, for fiction films and others? It is no accident that in the cinema some cameramen, some directors, some critics, some spectators demonstrate a real 'fetishism of technique', often noted or denounced as such ('fetishism' is taken here in its ordinary sense, which is rather loose but does contain within it the analytical sense that I shall attempt to disengage). The fetish

30. A startling (though only partial) resemblance with the case of 'dreams within a dream'; cf 'The Interpretation of Dreams,' *Standard Edition*, op cit, Vol IV, p 338.

72 proper, like the apparatus of the cinema, is a *prop*, the prop that disavows a lack and in doing so affirms it without wishing to. A prop, too, which is as it were *deposited* on the body of the object; a prop which is the penis, since it negates its absence, and hence a partial object that makes the whole object loveable and desirable. The fetish is also the point of departure for specialised practices, and as is well known, desire in its modalities is the more 'technical' the more it is perverse.

Thus with respect to the desired body – to the body of desire rather – the fetish is in the same position as the technical equipment of the cinema with respect to the cinema as a whole. A fetish, the cinema as a technical performance, as prowess, as an *exploit*, an exploit that underlines and denounces the lack on which the whole arrangement is based (the absence of the object, replaced by its reflection), an exploit which consists at the same time of making this absence forgotten. The cinema fetishist is the person who is enchanted at what the machine is capable of, at the *theatre of shadows* as such. For the establishment of his full potency for cinematic enjoyment (*jouissance*) he must think at every moment (and above all *simultaneously*) of the force of presence the film has and of the absence on which this force is constructed.³¹ He must constantly compare the result with the means set to work (and hence pay attention to the technique), for his pleasure lodges in the gap between the two. Of course, this attitude appears most clearly in the 'connoisseur', the cinephile, but it also occurs, as a partial component of cinematic pleasure, in those who just go to the cinema: if they do go it is partly in order to be carried away by the film (or the fiction, if there is one), but also in order to *appreciate* as such the machinery that is carrying them away: they will say, precisely when they have been carried away, that the film was a 'good' one, that it was 'well made' (the same thing is said of a harmonious body).

It is clear that fetishism, in the cinema as elsewhere, is closely linked to the good object. The function of the fetish is to restore the latter, threatened in its 'goodness' (in Melanie Klein's sense) by the terrifying discovery of the lack. Thanks to the fetish, which covers the wound and itself becomes erotogenic, the object as a whole can become desirable again without excessive fear. In a similar way, the whole cinematic institution is as it were *recovered* by a thin and omni-present garment, a stimulating prop through which it is consumed: the ensemble of its equipment and its tricks – and not just the celluloid strip, the '*pellicule*' or 'little skin' which has been rightly mentioned in this connection (Roger Dadoun: "'King Kong": du monstre comme dé-monstration,' *Littérature* n 8, December 1972, p 109; Octave Mannoni: *Clefs pour*

31. I have studied this phenomenon at slightly greater length in 'Trucage et cinéma' in *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, tome II, Klincksieck, Paris 1972, pp 173-92.

l'imaginaire, op cit, p 180) – of the equipment which *needs* the lack in order to stand out in it by contrast, but which only affirms it insofar as it ensures that it is forgotten, and which lastly (its third twist) needs it not to be forgotten nonetheless, for fear that at the same stroke the fact that it caused it to be forgotten will itself be forgotten. 73

The fetish is the cinema in its *physical* state. A fetish is always material: insofar as one can make up for it by the power of the symbolic alone one is precisely no longer a fetishist. It is important to recall here that of all the arts the cinema is the one that involves the most extensive and complex equipment; the 'technical' dimension is more obtrusive in it than elsewhere. Along with television, it is the only art that is also an industry, or at least is so from the outset (the others become industries subsequently: music through the gramophone record or the cassette, books by mass printings and publishing trusts, etc). In this respect only architecture is a little like it: there are 'languages' that are *heavier* than others, more dependent on 'hardware'.

At the same time as it localises the penis, the fetish represents by synecdoche the whole body of the object as desirable. Similarly, interest in the equipment and technique is the privileged representative of *love for the cinema*.

The Law is what permits desire: the cinematic equipment is the instance thanks to which the imaginary turns into the symbolic, thanks to which the lost object (the absence of what is filmed) becomes the law and the principle of a specific and instituted signifier.

For in the structure of the fetish there is another point on which Mannoni quite rightly insists and which directly concerns my present undertaking. Because it attempts to disavow the evidence of the senses, the fetish is evidence that this evidence has indeed been *recorded* (like a tape stored in the memory). The fetish is not inaugurated because the child still believes its mother has a penis (= order of the imaginary), for if it still believed it completely, as 'before', it would no longer need the fetish. It is inaugurated because the child now 'knows very well' that its mother has no penis. In other words, the fetish not only has disavowal value, but also *knowledge value*.

That is why, as I said a moment ago, the fetishism of cinematic technique is especially well developed among the 'connoisseurs' of the cinema. That is also why the theoretician of the cinema necessarily retains within him – at the cost of a new backward turn that leads him to interrogate technique, to symbolise the fetish, and hence to maintain it as he dissolves it – an interest in the equipment without which he would not have any motive for studying it.

Indeed, the equipment is not just physical (= the fetish proper);

74 it also has its discursive imprints, its extensions in the very text of the film. Here is revealed the specific movement of theory: when it shifts from a fascination with technique to the critical study of the different *codes* that this equipment authorises. *Concern for the signifier* in the cinema derives from a fetishism that has taken up a position as far as possible along its cognitive flank. To adapt the formula by which Octave Mannoni defines disavowal (= 'I know very well . . . , but all the same'), the study of the signifier is a libidinal position constituted by weakening the 'but all the same' and profiting by this saving of energy to dig deeper into the 'I know very well', which thus becomes 'I know nothing at all, but I desire to know'.

Just like the other structures that constitute the foundation of the cinema, fetishism does not intervene only in the constitution of the signifier, but also in certain of its more particular configurations. Here we have *framings* and also certain *camera movements* (the latter can anyway be defined as progressive changes in framing).

Cinema with directly erotic subject matter deliberately plays on the edges of the frame and the progressive and if need be incomplete revelations allowed by the camera as it moves, and this is no accident. Censorship is involved here: censorship of films and censorship in Freud's sense. Whether the form is static (framing) or dynamic (camera movements), the principle is the same: the point is to gamble simultaneously on the excitation of desire and its retention (which is its opposite and yet favours it), by the infinite variations made possible precisely by the studios' technique on the exact emplacement of the *boundary* that bars the look, that puts an end to the 'seen', that inaugurates that more sinister crane-shot (or low-angle shot) towards the unseen, the guessed-at. The framing and its displacements (that determine the *emplacement*) are in themselves forms of 'suspense' and are extensively used in suspense films too, though they remain such forms in other cases. They have an inner affinity with the mechanisms of desire, of its postponements, its new impetus, and they retain this affinity in other places than erotic sequences (the only difference lies in the *quantum* which is sublimated and the *quantum* which is not). The way the cinema, with its wandering framings (wandering like the look, like the caress), finds the means to reveal space has something to do with a kind of permanent undressing, a generalised strip-tease, a less direct but more perfected strip-tease, since it also makes it possible to dress space again, to remove from view what it has previously shown, to *take back* as well as to retain (like the child at the moment of the birth of the fetish, the child who has already seen, but whose look beats a rapid retreat): a strip-tease pierced with 'flash-backs', inverted sequences that then give new impetus to the forward movement. These veiling-unveiling pro-

cedures can also be compared with certain cinematic 'punctuations', especially slow ones strongly marked by a concern for control and expectation (slow fade-ins and fade-outs, irises, 'drawn out' dissolves like those of Sternberg).³²

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'Theorise,' he says . . . (Provisional conclusion)

The psychoanalytic constitution of the cinema signifier is a very wide problem, one containing, so to speak, a number of 'panels'. I cannot examine them all here, and there will surely be some that I have not even mentioned.

However, something tells me that (for the present) I can stop here. I wanted to give a first idea of the field I perceive, and, to begin with, to assure myself that I was indeed perceiving it (I was not certain of it all at once).

Now I shall turn back on this study itself as an unfolding of my initial dream. Psychoanalysis does not illuminate only the film, but also the conditions of desire of whoever makes himself its theoretician. Interwoven into every analytical undertaking is the thread of a self-analysis.

I have loved the cinema, I no longer love it. I still love it. What I have wished to do in these pages is to keep at a distance, as in the scopic practice I have discussed, that which in me (= in everyone) can love it: to retain it as *questioned*. As questioning, too, for the wish to construct the film into an object of knowledge is to extend, by a supplementary degree of sublimation, the passion for seeing that made the cinephile and the institution themselves. Initially an undivided passion, entirely occupied in preserving the cinema as a good object (imaginary passion, passion for the imaginary), it subsequently splits into two diverging and reconverging desires, one of which 'looks' at the other: this is the theoretical break, and like all breaks it is also a link: that of theory with its object.

32. Reading this article in manuscript, Thierry Kuntzel has pointed out to me that in this paragraph I perhaps lean slightly too far towards fetishism and fetishism alone in discussing filmic figures that depend just as much on *cinematic perversion* in general: the hypertrophy of the perceptual component drive with its mises-en-scène, its progressions-retentions, its calculated postponements, etc. This objection seems to me (after the event) to be correct. I shall have to come back to it. Fetishism, as is well known, is closely linked to perversion (cf p 69), although it does not exhaust it. Hence the difficulty. For the cinematic effects I am evoking here (= playing on the framing and its displacements), the properly fetishistic element seems to me to be the '*bar*', the edge of the screen, the separation between the seen and the unseen, the 'arrestation' of the look. Once the seen or the unseen are envisaged rather than their intersection (their edge), we are dealing with scopic perversion itself, going beyond the strict province of the fetish.

76 I have used words like 'love of the cinema'. I hope I will have been understood. The point is not to restrict them to their usual meaning, the meaning suggested by 'archive rats' or fanatical 'Macmahonites' (who provide no more than exaggerated examples). Nor is the point to relapse into the absurd opposition between the affective and the intellectual. The point is to ask why many people go to the cinema when they are not obliged to, how they manage to 'assimilate' the rules of this game which is a fairly new one historically, how they themselves become cogs of the institution. For anyone who asks this question, 'loving the cinema' and 'understanding the film' are no more than two closely mingled aspects of one vast socio-psychical machinery.

As for someone who looks at this machine itself (the theoretician who desires to know it), I have said that he was of necessity sadistic. There is no sublimation, as Freud himself insisted, without 'defusion of the drives'. The good object has moved to the side of the knowledge and the cinema becomes a bad object (a dual displacement which favours the distances that enable 'science' to see its object). The cinema is 'persecuted', but this persistence is also a reparation (the knowing posture is both aggressive and depressive), a reparation of a specific kind, peculiar to the semio-logist: the *restoration* to the theoretical body of what has been taken from the *institution*, from the code which is being 'studied'.

To study the cinema: what an odd formula! How can it be done without 'breaking' its beneficial image, all that idealism of film as an 'art' full and simple, the seventh of the name? By breaking the toy one loses it, and that is the position of the semiotic discourse: it feeds on this loss, it puts in its place the hoped for advance of knowledge: it is an inconsolable discourse that consoles itself, that takes itself by the hand and goes to work. Lost objects are the only ones one is afraid to lose, and the semiologist is he who rediscovers them *from the other side*: 'Il n'y a de cause que de ce qui cloche' – a cause is required only when something is not working properly.³³

Translated by Ben Brewster

33. [Cf Jacques Lacan: *Le Séminaire*, tome XI, op cit, p 25. Lacan contrasts a *cause*, as an occult property, with a *law*, in which 'causes' are smoothly absorbed as variables in a function; the unconscious, however, will remain a cause in the occult sense, because its order exceeds any particular function: it is The Law rather than a law, *énonciation* rather than *énoncé*, '*lalangue*' rather than a *langue* – hence its privileged manifestation in the lapse, the mistake, the point at which discourse 'limps'.]

**The Human Subject – You, He, or Me?
(Or, the Case of the Missing Penis)***

Julia Lesage

For film students who do not read French, *Screen* has been the only text to make available Continental Marxist-oriented studies on narrative structure, ideology, and psychoanalytic interpretations of film, and in so doing it has been an extremely valuable resource. However, in the recent Brecht issue (v 15 n 2, Summer 1974), Stephen Heath and Colin MacCabe use certain premises from orthodox Freudianism as the basis for their political arguments about narrative form: premises first introduced in the previous issue's editorial which are not only false but overtly sexist and as such demand political refutation.

I am referring to the *Screen* writers' accepting as an unquestioned given the Freudian concepts of penis envy, the child's definition of the female as the castrated person lacking a phallus, and fetishism. Such concepts are stated by MacCabe, for example, as follows:

'The fetish is that object which places the subject in a position of security outside of the terrifying area of difference opened up by the perception of the mother's non-possession of the phallus' (p 22).

I have been told by several British friends that a serious study of Freud has just begun in English academic circles, especially in the humanities. This is strange to me as an American, since the US gave Freud his greatest acceptance both in clinical and intellectual fields and in the Vulgar Freudianism that flowered in the 20's and 30's here. As a child of the 50's in the US, I lived in a milieu where I interpreted all personal relations and most literature I read in Freudian terms, where psychoanalysis promised the middle class solutions to their identity problems and angst, and where vulgarised

* Reprinted from *Jump Cut, a Review of Contemporary Cinema*, n 4, Nov-Dec 1974.

78 Freudian concepts were part of daily life in the childbearing advice of Spock and Gessell, the advice columns of Dear Abby, and the sentimental filmic melodramas of Douglas Sirk. Of course, as every American undergraduate knows, psychology since Freud has been a field of massive corrections and astonishing counter schools. In this light, it is most peculiar to find British intellectuals holding to orthodox psychoanalysis, particularly when throughout the 60's the Scottish clinician R D Laing attacked such basic Freudian concepts as studying the isolated, reified individual.

In the 60's one of the first victories of the women's movement in the US was to liberate ourselves both academically and personally from the Freud trap. On the personal level, we stopped seeing ourselves as sick people who needed to be *cured* of masochism or of not having vaginal orgasms. We saw that the definition of an arrival at womanhood could not come through orthodox psychotherapy but rather through an understanding of the mechanisms of socialisation, which are inherently oppressive to women. Many of us in my middle-class academic milieu had been fucked over by psychoanalysts telling us something was wrong with our female selves when it was our social position as women that was making our lives unbearable. And when I see intellectuals such as MacCabe and Heath, who would not think of basing arguments on racist theories of Herrenstein and Shockley, ground their ideas in an oppressive orthodox Freudianism that takes the male as the basis for defining the female, my first reaction is one of political and intellectual rage.

However, I also wonder what psychological theory besides Freud people are reading in England. Much feminist scholarship has been done on the subject.¹ One could direct MacCabe and Heath, for

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1. Some critics of the Freudian view of woman work from the inside of a psychoanalytic perspective, reinterpreting the Oedipal experience in terms that no longer make the male the norm. These critics refer to the fact that infants of both sexes relate first to the mother as their primary identification and become her 'loveable object' to ensure her constant attention. She is the source of their primary identification and the child regards her not only with love but with frustration and rage. In the suppression that takes place with sex role identification, these critics understand that the male child's development does not so much entail the boy child's seeing the woman as castrated and thus inferior (in that case, he would not fear her) as it entails his 'putting down' the womanly qualities in himself, with all the powerful and ambiguous attitudes towards the mother and his own primary identification with her transferred into a fear and loathing of the 'womanly'. It is also obvious that when girls are asked to renounce this active primary attachment to the mother, someone like themselves, this affects their identity of themselves as women; if Freud clearly describes the ruthless repression that occurs when the girl turns her libido towards the man (who can give her a baby), feminists see this as an early distortion of the girl child's identity as a woman that takes place within a socialisation pattern that must be changed. For a neo-Freudian critique

example, to neo-Freudian Karen Horney, who, as far back as 1926, pointed out that Freud's psychoanalytic ideas of feminine develop-

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of Freud on woman, including a critique of Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, see the following: Shulamith Firestone: *The Dialectic of Sex* (Wm Morrow, 1970); Nancy Chodorow: 'Family Structure and Feminine Personality' in Rosaldo and Lamphere, eds: *Women, Culture and Society* (Stanford University Press, 1974); Gregory Zilborg: 'Masculine and Feminine: Some Biological and Cultural Aspects,' *Psychiatry*, Vol 7, 1944; Viola Klein: *The Feminine Character: History of an Ideology* (University of Illinois Press, 1946 and 1971); Elizabeth Lang, review of Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, *Telos* n 20 (Summer 1974).

Feminist activists have particularly attacked that aspect of Freudian psychology which refuses to define women's sexual pleasure in women's terms, something many women in consciousness-raising groups have discussed with other women and are defining for themselves. Freud refers to sexual activity, the libido, and even the clitoris (only women, in fact, have an organ solely for sexual pleasure) in masculine terms. In definitive physiological studies that reverse Freudian premises about the sexual 'nature' of women, Masters and Johnson have shown that the apex of physical pleasure is reserved for women who have the physical capacity for unlimited orgasms, stimulated by manual or mechanical manipulation and not intercourse. Sadly, Freudian-based interpretations of women's sexuality have kept women down, socialising them not even to enjoy their own biology.

Freud distinguished between vaginal and clitoral orgasms and set up corresponding 'stages' in women's maturity (he calls the clitoris a pseudo-penis; the baby is the substitute penis that a man can restore to a woman once she has gotten to the vaginal stage). For refutations and angry responses to this essentially oppressive psychological construct, see the following: Kate Millet: *Sexual Politics* (Doubleday, 1970); Ann Koedt: 'The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm,' *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation*, 1970; Alix Kates Shulman: 'Organs and Orgasms,' in Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran, eds: *Women in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness* (New American Library 1971). These draw on Masters and Johnson: *Human Sexual Response* (Little Brown, 1966).

The feminist attack on Freud takes place within the larger context of restructuring academic disciplines in which the premises and the very language used take the male experience as the norm (eg Lévi-Strauss's accepting and *uncritical* generalisation that in every culture the 'exchange' of women is one of the three primary bases of exchange). The most significant critiques of Freud attack the very bases of his theory. The following authors demonstrate that all the traits attributed by Freud to the influence of anatomy on character traits can be explained by the influence of cultural pressures, sex role socialisation, and the impact of a specific social and historical situation on character structures. See Clara Thompson: 'The Role of Women in This Culture,' 'Cultural Pressures in the Psychology of Women,' and '"Penis Envy" in Women,' in *Psychiatry*, Vols 4, 5, 6 in 1941, 42, 43 respectively; Ann Oakley: *Sex, Gender, and Society* (Harper and Row); Lea Shaeffer: *Women and Sex* (Praeger); Mary Jane Sherfey: *The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality*; Naomi Weisstein: 'Psychology Constructs the Female,' in *Woman in Sexist Society*, op cit.

80 ment, far from being universal concepts, were rather typical ideas she found boys had of girls. She drew up a table comparing boys' ideas to current ideas in psychoanalysis about sexual, especially feminine, development:²

The Boys' Ideas

Our psychoanalytic ideas of feminine development

Naive assumption that girls as well as boys possess a penis

For both sexes it is only the male genital which plays any part

Realisation of the absence of a penis

Sad discovery of the absence of the penis

Idea that the girl is a castrated, mutilated boy

Belief of the girl that she once possessed a penis and lost it by castration

Belief that the girl has suffered punishment that also threatens him

Castration is conceived of as the infliction of punishment

The girl is regarded as inferior

The girl regards herself as inferior. Penis envy

The boy is unable to imagine how the girl can ever get over this loss or envy

The girl never gets over the sense of deficiency and inferiority and has constantly to master afresh her desire to be a man

The boy dreads her envy

The girl desires throughout life to avenge herself on the man for possessing something she lacks

Although MacCabe and Heath do not refer to feminine psychological development (more the pity), their use of the orthodox Freudian assumption in which the male is the standard by which all psychological development is judged, implies the above view of female development. More specifically, in terms of articles in *Screen*, this emphasis on 'symbolic castration' first led Colin MacCabe and Ben Brewster in the editorial of the Spring 1974 issue to a serious misreading of Roland Barthes' *S/Z*. It now brings Heath and MacCabe to a strictly Freudian interpretation of Barthes' use of the term 'fetishism' in an article in the Summer 1974 issue, and it finally undermines Heath's whole political argument in his reading

2. Originally in 'The Flight from Womanhood: The Masculinity in Women as Viewed by Men and Women,' *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, Vol VII, 1926. Table reprinted in Phyllis Chesler: 'Patient and Patriarch,' in *Woman in Sexist Society*, op cit, p 377.

To elaborate: In the Spring 1974 editorial, Ben Brewster and Colin MacCabe praise Barthes' *S/Z* because Barthes does not just pursue semiology as a pure science. Barthes does not see the results of semiology as valuable in and of themselves; on the contrary, he always maintains criteria of value, in a political sense, in his study of literature and culture. In *S/Z*, Barthes dissects a short story by Balzac, *Sarrasine*, in order to open up the text to multiple readings. In particular, he shows how the social world and symbolic structures intrude on the narrative and are used by it. The story *Sarrasine* is about a *castrato* who is admired by a young artist and courted as a woman. Obviously themes of castration and sexual transgression are part of the very content of the work. MacCabe and Brewster, however, make the castration theme, rather than the theory and method of literary analysis, Barthes' major concern. Barthes traces out five fields or levels of approach to the classical narrative: semic or adjectival connotations, or the traits defining persons; the range of human actions; established institutionalised knowledge or common sense; symbolic coding; and narrative enigmas – their placement, retardation, and final solution. MacCabe and Brewster insist that Barthes' major interest lay in the area of symbolic coding, for which *S/Z* gives no evidence, and they reduce Barthes' own very deliberately 'plural' text to the following interpretation:

'In *S/Z*, Barthes approaches Balzac's story through a number of codes, the most important of which is this "symbolic code" (or rather "symbolic field", since it is constituted by a transgression of the symbolic) – the area of the text which articulates a set of substitutes inaugurated by the acceptance of a symbolic castration' (v 15 n 1, Spring 1974, p 8).

What does all this have to do with film? The major theoretical point made in the Brecht issue of *Screen* is that representational art – either a fictional narrative where there is an omniscient point of view or a feature film where we are given a superior viewpoint from which to judge the characters – makes us into 'subjects'. We consume the knowledge offered by the narrative, and as spectators, we get a sense of ourselves as unified, not as living in contradiction. MacCabe says that this experience of traditional narrative cinema 'petrifies the spectator in a position of pseudo-dominance', and the 'metalanguage [of omniscient narrative discourse], resolving as it does all contradictions, places the spectator outside the realm of contradiction and of action – outside of production' (p 24).

The alternative proposed by Stephen Heath and others in this Brecht issue is a Brechtian cinema, the most oft quoted example of which is Godard and Gorin's *Tout va bien*.³ Such a cinema would

3. In spite of their desire to avoid reductionism, *Screen* authors refer

82 *produce* contradictions which are not flattened out by the narrative structures as a whole. The spectator not only criticises, but the spectator's very position is no longer one of pseudo-dominance; rather, it is given as critical and contradictory. When we watch a Brechtian performance, we are pulled out of our very fixity (Heath, p 112).

According to the French Marxist Louis Althusser, the individual constituted as subject is the mechanism whereby our social institutions and relations reconstitute themselves. In other words, the family, the church, schools, factories, advertisements, all call upon us as subjects and make demands upon us, shape us. Language, literature, and our psychological formation reinforce the notion of ourselves as subjects. In an essay in the *Summer Screen*, 'Diderot, Brecht and Eisenstein', Barthes introduces the notion of fetishism to describe certain limitations, which have political consequences, placed on the 'subject' or the person viewing representational art. He says that a representation is like a tableau which cuts out segments merely in order to depict them from a unified point of view.

'In theatre, in the cinema, in traditional literature, things are always seen *from somewhere*. Here we have the geometrical foundation of representation: a fetishist subject is required to cut out the tableau. The point of meaning is always the Law: law of society, law of struggle, law of meaning' (p 38).

What Barthes meant by the fetishist subject is elaborated then in an article by Heath, 'Lessons from Brecht'.

'The structure of representation is a structure of fetishism. The subject is produced in a position of separation from which he [sic] is confirmed in an imaginary coherence (the representation is the guarantee of his self-coherence) the condition of which is the ignorance of the structure of production, of his setting in position' (p 106).

So far the examination of a Brechtian narrative and its opposite, closed representational narrative from a psychoanalytic perspective, has profound political implications. But Heath undermines those implications – as do MacCabe and Brewster by precisely positing in their essays the subject of their discourse as a monolith without contradictions: that is as male. Fetishism is described

to *Tout va bien* and *Letter to Jane* as Godard's films (v 15 n 1, Spring 1974, p 5; n 2, Summer 1974, pp 104-5, 120-21), thus erasing all the contradictions Godard and Gorin faced over a period of at least five years when they decided to work collectively. In particular, they ignore Gorin's specifically Brechtian contributions to the partnership of the films from 1969 to 1972; the most 'Brechtian' are the ones in which Gorin has major influence: *Wind from the East*, *Struggles in Italy*, *Tout va bien* and *Letter to Jane*.

solely in phallic terms. And Heath goes so far as to analyse the film via a strict comparison with one of Freud's case studies of a fetish – that of an English-speaking German male's fetish for a woman's shiny nose (substitute penis). Heath extends the pun that was crucial in this case – glance/*Glanz* (or shine, brilliance) – into an analysis of the adverse ideological effects of heightened, brilliant photography at which we glance. 'The fetish is a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it' (p 107). Do women, too, endow representations with penises they fear to lose (or fear they have lost)? Heath falls into the political trap he admires Brecht for avoiding. For Heath spectators are all the same – all male. Heath refers to humans in general, as do most writers in *Screen*, as male, as *he*. If, indeed, the authors writing for *Screen* are interested in critiquing the oppressive ideology inherent in traditional representative forms and linguistic structures, the publication itself could institute an editorial policy expunging sexism from its critical language. Yet, as MacCabe and Heath should be the first to recognise, it is not merely a question of vocabulary, of substituting 'people' for 'he'. We not only have to recognise differences of class but entirely different social experiences based on the fact of sex, the fact of the oppression of one sex. In the authors' own terms, postulating individuals as non-contradictory, unified, and reduced subjects acts to blind us all and limit our potential for action, for production, and for transforming society. Let *Screen's* authors stop reducing the human norm to the male and stop elevating the male to the norm.

Comment

Julia Lesage's critique of the *Screen* special number on Brecht can be divided into three main areas of emphasis: 1. the proposal of 'orthodox Freudianism' as the trap into which contributors to that number have fallen; 2. the identification of a fundamental distortion of Barthes' *S/Z* in a previous editorial; 3. the objection to the use of the concept of fetishism in the course of discussions concerning representation. In what follows, an attempt will be made to look at these points of criticism in the interests of an understanding of the issues they raise, leaving aside the element of *attack* so pronounced in the overall development of the critique.

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84 If there are errors in our work, it may be that they stem from significant problems which, however inadequately for the moment, we are trying to resolve and which more 'rage' is unlikely to help us to clarify. Not primarily a 'reply', the real ambition of this comment is thus the demonstration of these problems and hence of our theoretical tasks, of the situation of the work we are doing.

It is certain that *Screen* contributors refer to Freud and that this reference has been increasingly important over the last few numbers (as it will be, doubtless, over those to come). What is much less certain is the characterisation of the reference in conjunction with the idea of a monolithic 'orthodox Freudianism'. Evidently, the context and orthodoxy of psychoanalysis differ widely from continent to continent, from country to country; Lesage's American experience is not ours: in Britain, psychoanalysis has never known that massive socio-ideological expansion-in-exploitation and the initial intellectual enthusiasm for Freud lapsed after the war into stolid resistance broken occasionally by bursts of violent dismissal, psychoanalysis coming to represent, in every sense of the word, the *unspeakable*. More relevantly here, orthodoxy varies from school to school and from Association to Association (as well as within them): it is, in fact, precisely the current activity of the theoretical debate that is a major factor in our reference to psychoanalysis. The idea of the 'Freudian orthodoxy' is for us far from helpful (unless, the orthodoxy once having been specified as the social exploitation in ideology of 'vulgarised Freudian concepts', its relations to Freud's scientific constructions are carefully examined – from which examination can *then* be posed the difficulties with regard to the implications of the former in the latter, the difficulties of the ideological investment in science, not simply in its use but also in its discourse) and appears to operate finally as a straight rejection of any practical consideration of Freud and psychoanalysis (which is to avoid the problems of investment and cast Freudian analysis as totally ideological, as furnishing no hold of knowledge).

As was said, we refer to Freud, to Freudian concepts, and it is here that those questions emerge which are central for the intelligibility of our work: why do we make this reference? what do we understand by psychoanalysis? The questions come together into one, and any answer at this stage can only be offered in acknowledging with Althusser that 'whoever wishes today to comprehend Freud's revolutionary discovery, at once recognise its existence *and* grasp its meaning, must, at the cost of great critical and theoretical effort, cross the vast terrain of ideological prejudice which separates us from Freud'. The contours of that terrain are made clear in Lesage's critique and its pitfalls can no doubt be seen in the articles on Brecht: 'there is no ready way into some purity of discourse – only, as best we are able, critical and theoretical effort.

The texts against Freud and Freudianism from within the women's movement that Lesage cites may be legitimate protests against the oppression of women and its ideological justification by certain currents of Freudian thought, to be found even within Freud's own writing; but the quotations and references she assembles are beside the point. It makes no difference whether or no there is a homology between little boys' fantasies and certain concepts of psychoanalytic theory; a critique of that theory can only be based on an examination of how those concepts work within it. It was not Freud's intention to prescribe recipes for the maximum of sexual pleasure or to judge between the capacities of men and women, the different erotogenic zones or the various types of object choice in this respect. 'The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman' (*Standard Edition*, Vol XVIII, pp 145-72) shows this clearly; it also shows that, without lapsing into notions of 'intersubjectivity', Freud was quite capable of taking his patients' families and other social relations into account, both insofar as patients bring them into analysis directly, and insofar as special issues are raised when it is the patients' families' desires rather than the patients' own that lead them into analysis in the first place. All these arguments have been more than adequately dealt with by Juliet Mitchell in her *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (now available as a Pelican paperback). Here we need only concentrate on two points. First, the incompatibility of the different authorities she cites. Various kinds of Freudian revisionism, the 'existentialist psychoanalysis' of Laing, already much more remote from the psychoanalytic tradition, and the 'sexology' of Masters and Johnson cannot be synthesised into any coherent position from which it would be possible to move from a protest against oppression to the knowledge of that oppression which is also a precondition (but not the only or the first one) of its removal. Second, the position that does tie together this assemblage of contradictory anti-Freudianisms, and also Lesage's refusal of one of the central theses of the Brecht issue of *Screen* which she so ably summarises, is the desire for a social practice that will give as much sanction to the 'feminine' as it does to the 'masculine'. But her formulation of the desire presupposes the natural pre-existence of masculine and feminine subjects: what she really rejects in Freud is the thesis of bisexuality. As one of us wrote in a related connection in *Screen* v 16 n 1, Spring 1975, p 133, this formulation 'entails the position that there is a definitely defined male sexuality which can simply find expression and also an already existent female sexuality which simply lacks expression'; she presumes that the oppression of women, or rather of 'femininity', is only the secondary 'conditioning' of the feminine subject by discriminatory law and education reinforced by ideological institutions such as psychoanalytic practice, and even film criticism. Our articles in the Brecht issue and since may argue that this oppression is more deeply rooted, but

86 this implies neither that we assume a monolithic masculine subject, nor that we are reconciled to an ineradicable inferiority of women.

In this connection, a note might be inserted here in respect of the linguistic sexism of *Screen* contributors as manifested in the use made of 'he' as the pronoun for the term 'subject'. The criticism as made is both right and wrong: right, because language weighs with a pressure that only the vigilance of others can help us to determine; wrong, because the problem is more complex than the expression it receives: all that is achieved by substituting 'people' for 'he' is a collapse into an essentialism of the person (the expunging, that is, of the whole reality of the psychoanalytic intervention); in fact, what is probably needed in English is a movement between 'it', the subject in psychoanalysis, male and female (remember the importance of the thesis of bisexuality), and 'she', the subject defined as exchange value in the ideological assignation of discourse in so far as this is the positioning of a 'masculinity' in which 'femininity' is placed and displaced ('masculinity' and 'femininity'), and this is precisely that importance of the bisexuality thesis, being the blocking opposition of a process that escapes it on the body of each individual); such positioning is effective in the structures of representation with which the Brecht articles dealt — whence the tendency towards 'he' (more correctly, therefore, 'she').

Let us come back to the questions of the reference to psychoanalysis. By psychoanalysis, we understand a science whose specific object is the unconscious and its formations, and which, as such, is a necessary component of historical materialism in the knowledge it produces of the construction of the subject ('the unconscious is a concept forged on the trail of what operates to constitute the subject' Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, Paris 1966; all subsequent quotations are from this work). The 'orthodoxy' to which we refer is thus that which can be grasped in Freud's writings *in this perspective* and this perspective has been focussed above all in Lacan's restitution of Freudian analysis as 'materialist theory of language', of the 'talking cure' (Anna O's description of the treatment Breuer created with her and which Freud was so radically to develop) as the attention brought to bear on the positions of the subject in the symbolic. To refuse to pose the instance of the subject is to fall into idealism (the unity of consciousness as the founding disposition of the world) or its crude 'materialist' counterpart (the subject-atom). Hence our attempt to think this instance, to articulate the process of the subject within historical materialism, and our reference to psychoanalysis as science of this articulation.

What does all this have to do with film? As a step towards an answer, two things may be stressed. Firstly, there is a need to mark out a distance from traditional notions of 'applying' psycho-

analysis to film: as science psychoanalysis is not to be applied 87
 'from outside', so to speak, to accepted fields of interest; it cuts across, largely and differently, those fields, constituting new 'objects', new points of interrogation. The problem is to understand the terms of the construction of the subject and the modalities of the replacement of this construction in specific signifying practices, where 'replacement' means not merely the repetition of the place of that construction but also, more difficultly, the supplacement – the overplacing: supplementation or, in certain circumstances, supplantation (critical interruption) – of that construction in the place of its repetition. For example (an example which extends a remark made in another context by Christian Metz in his article): there is a relation between mirror-phase and cinematic institution that should be examined, yet the condition of such an examination is exactly the non-reduction of the *relation*: nothing is to be gained by describing cinema as the mirror-phase, the crux is the relation, that is, the difference, the supplacement – refiguration of a subject-spectator who has already completed the mirror-phase; it is the figure of the subject as turning-point (*circulation*) between image and industry (poles of the cinematic institution) which demands study. Our hypothesis, therefore, is that a crucial – determining – part of the functioning of ideological systems is the establishment of a series of machines (institutions) which *move* – placing of desire – the subject ('sender' and 'receiver') in an appropriation of the symbolic into the imaginary (the definition of *miscognition*). When we talked of representation (the exhaustion of the heterogeneity of the process of the subject in the symbolic) and used the concept of fetishism (the denial of work: that is, of heterogeneity and process) to identify its mechanism, we were tentatively beginning to explore this hypothesis, offering a point from which it could be formulated.

Secondly, as was briefly indicated above, the justification of a materialist theory of language is its attention to the passage of the subject in the symbolic, a subject radically excentric to the chain in which it never ceases to insist in the intermittence of the signifying elements – thus 'a signifier represents a subject for another signifier' (p 840). Linguistically, this slide can be seized in the disjunction of the *sujet de l'énoncé* and the *sujet de l'énonciation*. In the utterance 'I am lying', for example, it is evident that the subject of the proposition is not one with the subject of the enunciation of the proposition and vice versa; the 'I' cannot lie on both planes at once (dream, lapsus and joke are so many disorders of the regulation of these planes, of the exchange between subject and signifier). From here (and Freud himself alludes to this turning division when he compares the multiple appearance of the ego in a dream with anaphoric pronominalisation in such sentences as 'When I think what I've done to this man'), the question can be posed as to the foundation of knowledge in the homogeneity

88 of the self-reflexive consciousness, a question to which the discovery of the unconscious replies by the demonstration of division, of a work, of the constitutive impossibility of a cohesion between *énoncé* and *énonciation* as the simple identity of the subject ('the only homogenous function of consciousness is the imaginary capture of the ego by its specular reflection and the function of mis-cognition which rests attached to it' p 832).

Question and reply are vital for what is at stake is the opening of theory to the very force of the articulation of desire: the unconscious is not there as the term of some primitive desire or instinct trying to break through into the higher level of consciousness; rather it is desire that is the term of the unconscious, of the entry into the symbolic, into language which escapes the subject in its structure and effects, something in language which is beyond consciousness and where the function of desire can be located. Divided in the passage into and in language (nothing to do with the existential anguish of the 'divided self': the division is formative; not to recognise this is, precisely, fetishism), the subject moves across the discursive play of consciousness and unconscious, image and letter ('material support that discourse borrows from language'), according to the determination of the lack (castration) in which it, the subject, is introduced, which it introduces – the *manque-à-être* ('lack-in-being') –, in which desire is inscribed: at the same time that the discourse figures the subject, the subject indexes the discourse as lack, the turning of desire; 'the drama of the subject in language is the experience of this *manque-à-être* . . . it is because it fends off this moment of lack that an image takes up the position of bearing the whole cost of desire: projection, function of the imaginary . . . against this is set up in the very core of *l'être*, to indicate the gap, an index: introjection, relation to the symbolic . . .' (p 655). The basis of the psychoanalytic discovery is the articulation of the construction of the subject with regard to sexuality through the division of the entry into the symbolic and the disposition of real, imaginary and symbolic in this process. Crucial here is then the phallus: 'the phallus . . . is the signifier of the very loss that the subject suffers by the discontinuity of the signifying' (p 715); 'it is at the moment when the subject passes from being to having in the quest for the phallus that is inscribed the *Spaltung* [splitting] by which the subject is jointed with the logos' (p 642). In other words, the phallus is the signifier on which hinges the dependence of the access to genital sexuality with regard to a movement received as exclusion (from *being* the phallus): 'analysis reveals that the phallus has the function of the signifier of the *manque-à-être* which determines the subject's relation to the signifying' (p 710). It is this function and determination for which the Œdipus provides a description.

It is this problem of description, of course, which causes all the

difficulties of which the Lesage critique is one form of expression. Without in any sense entering into the detail of these difficulties, even less pretending to resolve them, it may be worthwhile making one or two remarks concerning their levels of pertinence since it is not always clear that these are grasped in their formulation. Thus, much confusion is created by the conflation of 'phallus' and 'penis' where the former is precisely the signifier of the term of the relation between mother and infant (boy or girl) which the Œdipus remodels in its translation from being to having the phallus, a translation potentially available in a plurality of modes notwithstanding the blockage that the necessary interarticulation with a given set of social definitions may operate. The crux of psychoanalysis is not this or that definition but the difficult dialectic between being and having in the movement of need, demand and desire. If 'phallic' is *simply* made to mean 'masculine' and hence 'repressive', and then pushed back onto psychoanalysis as a monolithic orthodoxy, it will be easy to dismiss Freud, but what gets dismissed along with this is, again, the whole question of the process of the subject. Nothing stops you criticising Freudian constructions – for example, the notion of 'penis-envy' – but it is essential that in so doing the real issues should be seen – the issue of the desire of the mother in the register of being, the modalities of its conversion in a structure that *may* return the *position* of a 'penis-envy'. In this respect, the introduction of the idea of fetishism in the discussion of representation was exactly the exploration of a form of positionality; the effect of the argument was not to identify cinema and fetishism (so that the question is not one of endowing representations with penises) but to examine the positioning of object and subject in a pattern of disavowal, a certain structural security (even if the terms of the objection were to be accepted, its formulation would, therefore, still be wrong: it is the representation itself which is the endowment of the penis). This structure does not make us subjects, it places subjectivity; it effects an assignation of the subject in the imaginary, *captures* the subject in the coherence of an image, and the 'knowledge' of narrative is the mirror of that subject-image, the speculation of cinema. What remains unclear is the determination of the structure, the pull between the construction of the subject and the socio-historical articulation of that construction (it is this determination that can be seen at work in the description of representation through fetishism as a masculine structure: woman has no place – she is indeed the blind spot – other than as the object of this structure or as the assumption of the place of its subject (Sylvia Scarlett cutting off her own tresses to become the *hero* of Cukor's film) – which again is the confirmation of her objectality: the subject, male and female, is held in the distance of the structure, the aim of which is precisely the fixing of 'male' and 'female' as the full terms of a system of exchange, the reduction of differ-

90 ence in each individual into the straight social opposition – ‘masculine’/‘feminine’). We touch with this unclarity on a fundamental area of research which is only now beginning to be posed correctly; as Althusser puts it: ‘How are we to think rigorously the relation between the formal structure of language, condition of the absolute possibility of the existence and intelligibility of the unconscious, the concrete structures of kinship and, finally, the concrete ideological formations through which are lived the specific functions (fatherhood, motherhood, childhood) implied in the kinship structures? can we conceive the historical variation of these last structures (kinship, ideology) as visibly affecting this or that aspect of the instance isolated by Freud?’

If we have no immediate answer, we are convinced nonetheless that the immediate dismissal of Freudian analysis is simply the foreclosure of these questions which it must be our critical and theoretical effort to refine across the specific terms of our field of study: cinema. The discussion of representation was merely a start; it remains to develop the problems of that discussion – break down the notion of representation historically, pose in consequence the relations of language and positionality and its articulations, and from there the notion of a new language (that is, of a new practice of language), define the situation of cinema as superstructural institution, which may be, in the understanding of the meta-psychological functioning of that institution (the relation between cinematic machine and construction of the subject – the supplacement), to come back critically on the use of the infrastructure/superstructure model, examine cinematic practice in the play between image and text, its contradictions, its movement, its process, the compactification-decompactification of the subject. Perhaps it can be added, as a coda, that this was the importance for us of Barthes’ *S/Z* in its analysis of a classic text, Balzac’s story *Sarrasine*, in which the symbolic irrupts into the imaginary, ‘figures’ in the movement of the text (hence the panic, the disruption of the fixed positions of exchange, of the given images). The symbolic is here the *overturning* of representation, from theatre to the other scene of its production, the loss of the ease of fetishism (in Balzac, to buy a theatre ticket is to buy a woman’s body). *S/Z* seemed – and seems – to us a fundamental attention (an analytic patience) to this and the redefinition of ‘theory and method of literary analysis’ *accordingly*.

BEN BREWSTER
STEPHEN HEATH
COLIN MACCABE

Film and System: Terms of Analysis Part II

Stephen Heath

The first part of this article (sections I-VI, in Screen v 16 n 1) posed problems relating to film analysis through an initial study of a single text, Touch of Evil directed by Orson Welles. Those problems, that study crystallised round the construction of the filmic system and in the course of the discussion of the particular film an attempt was made to define – or at least to suggest – the filmic system in the terms of a movement of partition and exchange, repercussion and displacement across the relation of narrative in its economy and its logic.

References follow the conventions of numeration for figures, stills and tables of narrative segmentation adopted in the first part which the reader is thus asked to have by him or her as a necessary aid to the intelligibility of this present continuation.

VII

'Mike' and 'Suzy', the names fall into place, the narrative folds back on the restoration of Susan to Vargas, their embrace – broken by the explosion at the beginning of the film – is resumed and nothing remains, almost, but to finish cleaning up, to dispose of Quinlan's body left floating in the oil-fouled water ('Isn't somebody going to come and take him away?', comments Tanya gazing down in IV f); the narrative is played out, the violence terminated, brought into line.

It was noted earlier (section IV) how the beginning of the narrative action depends on a violence as interruption, as the violation of a state of homogeneity, and how the point of the action, the goal of its advance, is the recovery of homogeneity according to a movement of reconvergence-reinvestment which, precisely, realigns, contains the violence anew. In *Touch of Evil*, the inaugural

92 violence is given literally in the explosion and the chosen victim of that explosion is Rudy Linneker, killed by his daughter Marcia and her boyfriend Sanchez (during the interrogation, Sanchez states that he and Marcia have been secretly married; 'boyfriend' is nevertheless used here since not only is all the emphasis of the film on Sanchez as an *illicit* lover but he is also constantly seen by Vargas and Quinlan – their distance from the contagion of illegality – as a 'boy', in the same way that Pancho for Vargas is a 'kid'). The beginning of the film, again quite literally, is thus the murder of the father, his annihilation (remember Quinlan: 'The key to this whole thing's the dynamite; the killer didn't just want Linneker dead, he wanted him destroyed, annihilated' I g), his dismemberment (Quinlan once more: 'An old lady on Main Street last night picked up a shoe – the shoe had a foot in it' II e); the father prohibits the sexual relation of daughter and boy: they kill him.

The explosion, the murder of the father, sets off the narrative, works out the patterns of exchange. The homology established in the opening shot between Vargas and Susan/Zita and Linneker (Mexican/American :: Mexican/American) is doubled, crucially, by that between Marcia and Sanchez/Susan and Vargas (American/Mexican :: American/Mexican); this homology for the narrative being cast as an opposition and hence as the possibility of a straightforward substitution: on the one hand, Marcia and Sanchez, on the other, Mike – Miguel – and Suzy: M and S/M and S, illegality/legality, violence/order, desire/position. Restoring Susan to Vargas, the narrative action resolves the disorder of Marcia and Sanchez and that resolution is then simultaneously – fundamentally – the restoration of the Father: to Susan, who comes to Vargas as the Name-of-the-Father ('Mike! Mike!'); to Vargas, who comes to the Law as the ego ideal; to the viewing subject, who comes to the film – is brought into the film – as the instance of a totality, as the coherence of position. Each of these terms, however, is difficult (which difficulty is the drama of the narrative): the construction of the totality of the subject as the position of the narrative slides in the release of the systems of exchange, of repetition and difference, that the narrative realises in order to hold together; if Vargas comes to the Law as ego ideal (*Ichideal*), seeks to rejoin law and justice as the place of an effective relation in the symbolic, that process in fact is turned to the imaginary, to the ideal ego (*Idealich*), to the level of a 'narcissistic captation', Vargas fixing the Law as the image of himself in a perfection that excludes the other; it follows that for Susan, Vargas cannot accord law and desire (the function of the real father) – on the contrary, he disjoins them absolutely in a pure prohibition (thus, as ideal father). (For the distinction between ego ideal and ideal ego see the Presentation of 'The Imaginary Signifier' in this issue of *Screen*, p 12.) Husband and father, to continue for a moment with this last

difficulty, Vargas is in both senses the *end* of desire in response to a logic that is itself endless in its circularity: Susan is forbidden the desire of the father, must desire the father in the husband, but the desire of the father is forbidden, therefore desire has no place, but that place is Vargas. . . . Vargas is the position of desire, its admission and its prohibition. Not surprisingly, he has two names: the name of desire is Mexican (Spanish) – *Miguel* (lying on her bed in the motel, Susan moans into the phone ‘I’m here . . . my own darling Miguel’ / V ‘Oh, I thought maybe you’d fallen asleep’ / S ‘I was just listening to you breathe, it’s a lovely sound. . . . I am sleepy’ II d, Still 18), that of the law American – *Mike* (for Susan, ‘Mike’ is precisely the name of position, of identity; the motel telephone conversation previously cited carries on and closes with Vargas refusing the name ‘Miguel’ and Susan trying to come back to ‘Mike’: V ‘Oh, of course you are. Well then, I’ll be calling you back later’ / S ‘Mike? . . .’); not surprisingly again, Vargas is Mexican but *not really* (Quinlan: ‘You don’t talk like one – a Mexican, I mean’ I d); the real Mexicans are Grandi or Pancho or Sanchez, or more importantly they are *hors-la-loi*, half-breeds, sexually dubious. The film uses the border, the play between American and Mexican, the passage from country to country in the motions of exchange analysed earlier (section IV) at the same time as it seeks to hold that play finally in the opposition of purity and mixture which in turn is a version of law and desire; Quinlan and Vargas are together against Sanchez (both are shaken by the murder of the father: Vargas loses Susan, Quinlan limps – ‘the shoe had a foot in it’); against the ‘boy’ (Q ‘Let’s keep it in English, Vargas’ / V ‘It’s alright by me – I’m sure he’s just as unpleasant in any language’ II c), against the *unpleasantness*.

Against the unpleasantness, the unspeakable: the very position of the narrative action, of the restitution of Susan as good object, her return to Vargas as prohibition. What the unpleasantness transposes – the putting of Sanchez at a distance, the killing of Grandi, eventually the killing of Quinlan – is the other side of the murder of the Father, the possession of the Mother. The film, the narrative, in other words, blocks the desire for and of the Mother by punishing the Mother for the murder of the Father: Zita, the sizzling stripper, once obliterated in body and image, the action of the restitution of Susan becomes equally the action of the aggression against Susan (aggression conducted by Grandi and Quinlan but also by Vargas) as the condition of *cleaning her name* (V ‘How can I leave until her name is clean! *clean!*’ IV e). The woman figures as the *fault* of desire; to destroy – to clean – her is thus to rid oneself (Quinlan or Vargas) of a repressed homosexuality (repressed but everywhere insistent in the movement of the film – Quinlan, Vargas and Menzies, the Grandi ‘family’, the replacement for Vargas of the American Susan by the American Schwartz),

94 to *put off* the fear of 'femininity', of genitality in the Reichian sense of the term developed by Kristeva ('possibility of recognition of two postures, masculine and feminine', 'experience of bisexuality, of sexual differentiation', 'traversée du phallique' – *La Révolution du langage poétique*, Paris 1974, pp 462, 485f). Quinlan's fantasy of strangulation – '*clean*, silent. . . . She was strangled, Pete. . . . You don't leave fingerprints with a piece of string. . . . that half-breed done it, of course, we all knew that' III h – acted out in the killing of Grandi with Susan's stocking, crystallises this: Grandi is killed in order to demonstrate Susan's guilt (*she* is the crime) and as the intolerable realisation of desire (Quinlan is then the criminal and the action can continue with its own crucial displacement – the substitution of Vargas for and against Quinlan and the *return* of Susan). The narrative, its logic, is traced ceaselessly between the Ideal Father and the Phallic Mother – 'the imaginary motive of most of the male perversions is the desire to preserve a phallus, that which interested the subject in the mother' (Lacan, *Ecrits*, Paris 1966, p 734), 'a false father set up for the sole purpose of avoiding fantasmatically the mother not having the phallus, of avoiding her being genital, her *coming*. This father is a mother. Phallic. The father in reality is a name. But no one is more afraid of that than the idealist.' (Sollers, *Sur le matérialisme*, Paris 1974, p 61) – , crossed by its work against the castration of the latter towards the defence of the position of the former. If a simple characterisation is needed, the narrative mode of *Touch of Evil* may be described succinctly as that of a defensive – *touched* – idealism.

No difference, no contradiction: restore the woman as good object between the poles of image and effacement, distance and obliteration; restore law against desire, position against incestuous confusion (the border town, the illicit sexuality of Marcia and Sanchez, the *brouillage* of the Grandi 'family'; Quinlan's fantasy includes this – 'some half-breed done it' III h – while Vargas excludes it as a kind of fantastic aberration – 'all border towns bring out the worst in a country, you know that' I k). Confronted with the disorder of the motel room after the 'rape' of Susan, the Night Man cries: 'It stinks in here! Let's get some air in here! It's a mess! a stinking mess!' (III n). The effort of the narrative action is to clean up the mess, to re-produce the necessary images. The *point* (of that effort, those images)? In terror of Susan in the aftermath of the murder of the father, the Night Man, hysterical in near medium-shot, jitters hands clenched hard in his pockets outside the motel, looking into the camera, into the bedroom, into us as Susan; cut to a close-up of a hand about to plunge the handle of a detonator marked 'Linneker Construction Company', a shot the perspective of which is the narrative action in – from – its support-

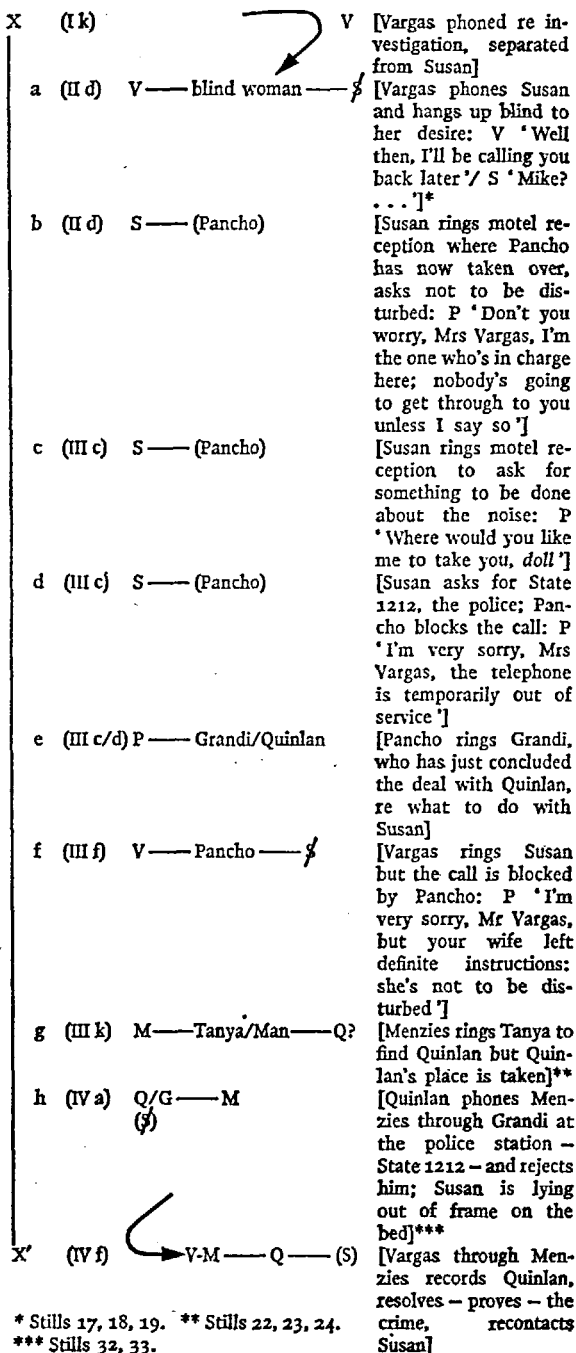
ing images (the shot, indeed the whole scene II b, has no function in the action), which breaks into the overturning logic of that action: from Susan as subject to the position of the knowledge, demonstration-repression, of such a 'subjectivity' in the image of the threat it represents – *she's dynamite*, she-Zita-Marcia-Susan, the film's narrative extension; as Quinlan puts it: 'The key to this whole thing's the dynamite . . . ' (I g). 95

There can be no question of trying to fix the film in a single reading, a coherent 'interpretation' (thematically, the film is apt for a number of readings); the purpose of the present analysis is merely to suggest the mechanism of the film, its functioning, its system, the terms of its production. It should be noted, moreover, that the narrative action is not obliged to be clear with its images – so long as *they* are clear. This or that character, for example, may occupy places now one way now another with regard to their organisation in the narrative disposition. Vargas can be played as Mexican or American (or rather than *and*: Vargas is outside the sense of confusion), one way in respect of Susan, another in the conflict with Quinlan (in fact, the latter – good Mexican versus rotten American – serves as a cover for the disengagement of Vargas-Charlton Heston as pure, hence non-Mexican, in the face of a dirty sexuality by which Susan is contaminated; we need to follow through in the film the pattern round Susan of Vargas' identification by Quinlan with Sanchez – in the interrogation scene he treats Vargas as Sanchez, stresses their kinship, 'you people' II e – and his own identification with Schwartz; from Suzy to Sanchez, from Sanchez to Schwartz, from Schwartz to Susan, Vargas gets things back in line). Suffice it then to bring into perspective in the light of what has here been suggested the patterns of narrative action and exchange as these were given previously in Figures IV and V.

The explosion opens an enigma that demands resolution (who killed Linneker?). In the film, this enigma initiates the investigation which then, however, becomes not the action of the solution of the crime but that of the conflict between Quinlan and Vargas. The investigation of the murder is displaced by the investigation of the investigation in such a way finally as to subsume the murder of the father under the killing of Grandi, the resolution of the latter 'forgetting' the former (Sanchez is 'incidentally' reported to have confessed at the end). This narrative displacement is transposed in the conflict between the two main protagonists: Quinlan believes, wants Sanchez to be guilty (so he frames him); Vargas believes, wants Sanchez to be innocent (so he attacks Quinlan for the framing). The stakes are high: Quinlan's 'intuition' – the 'game leg' – tells him that Sanchez is guilty (V 'Captain, have you anything definite on this boy Sanchez?' / Q 'Not yet, just my

intuition' II c) thus that Marcia is guilty thus Susan thus himself; Vargas's (V 'He could even be innocent you know' / Schwartz 'Intuition?' / V 'Why not? Quinlan doesn't have a monopoly on hunches' II c) that Sanchez is not guilty and so neither is Marcia nor Susan nor himself. It is this that the narrative has to settle and it can do so up to a certain degree, the degree to which it can *maintain* the images of Œdipal confusion under the advance of its action as the *conflict* between Vargas and Quinlan (it should be noted that the transposition into the terms of the conflict, the *narrative* displacement, subdues the question of Sanchez' guilt – Sanchez is guilty 'incidentally', Quinlan is right, but Vargas is right to protect the former from the 'rough deal', Quinlan is guilty; at one point moreover the narrative begins to set up an escape clause for Sanchez and Vargas: the introduction of the ex-convict Farnum in II b whom Vargas envisages in II c as an alternative solution to the crime; Farnum, however, comes to nothing, is narratively abandoned precisely because the narrative is committed to the conflict as able – more or less – to take the weight of the movement of resolution).

The degree of maintenance is so to speak the line, drawn across the whole length of the film, between Figures IV and V. What – *which* – crime is the action solving? Split over, displaced from the crime against the father to the crime against the Law, the action poses the resolution of the one as the resolution of the other, uses the conflict of Vargas and Quinlan as the term of the substitution of Susan and Vargas for Marcia and Sanchez. But in the split, in the displacement, nothing and everything is said about sexuality, about desire which comes back as the massive series of exchanges, of images and figures expressed in Figure V as 'the other side of the story': the narrative turns ceaselessly into the punishment of Susan as the image of its own desire, as the image of its own repression – the fascinated gaze that runs from the Night Man to the image of Zita across the body of Susan laid out along the line of the Grandi family, reflected between the 'nephews' and the mirroring Lia (Still 25), reflected over the pure narcissism of Pancho (Still 27), *looked*. Hence the two fundamental figurative modes of the narrative action in the play of its system: the telephone and, exactly, the look – triangulation and speculation, other and same. The narrative action could be schematised as a sequence of telephone calls in which communication is blocked (see Figure VI) while Susan is fixed, exchanged, under the look, is re-imaged (the 'rape' scene, for example, is just this; Stills 25 – Lia 'Will you let me stay, I want to watch' – 26, 27 and 28). Hardly surprising then that the Vargas/Quinlan conflict is figured in the film in the opposition of these modes: Still 17, Vargas on the phone *blind* to Susan's desire; Still 36, Quinlan jubilant in the capture of Susan in the image of the killing of Grandi.



* Stills 17, 18, 19. ** Stills 22, 23, 24.

*** Stills 32, 33.

98 Everything and nothing. Does the film say something else, 'outside', as it were, the turn of the narrative? In a sense it does, but still – which is the sense – from within the scope of the narrative. This is the difficulty of the scenes in Tanya's (I h, IV e), the loss of the narrative but placed nevertheless in its terms; something else but the 'something else' of its images, the uncertain 'memory' of a 'past'. 'Tanya's piano, the only pure rhythm in this syn-copated film, like a heart still beating in an agonising organism, is the last burst of life, an unbearable tenderness in the face of death . . . the momentary appearance of the lost happiness that music alone is capable of depicting on the threshold of hell' (Jean Collet, 'La Soif du mal', *Etudes cinématographiques* 24-25, 1963, p 116). The critic replies exactly to the narrative action, the placing of its loss as the *tragedy* of sexuality. Simply however, the loss *drifts*, something else again enters the system of the film, punctuates the narrative beyond its closure. From Tanya to Susan, something slips, gets out of place – which place then remains empty: as Vargas takes possession of Susan (brought back to him by Schwartzl), the same area of light fringed with darkness, the same emptiness as before in the hotel room (Stills 13 and 58); Susan returns in the chain of figures of light that crosses the narrative to figure her absence, and the fringe of darkness in Still 58 is Tanya, the shadow of loss, the distant memory of another scene. These moments of figure can only be grasped in stills or by slowing the film? *Precisely* – they pull outside of the continuous time of the narrative, of its representation.

VIII

What we call a film is a 'festival of affects' (Barthes); the aim of narrative is to take in charge this affectivity, to bring it to an end in the finality of a coherent – homogeneous – subject-position. Narrative, that is, may be seen as the fundamental mode of *framing* in film (the determining links between narrative constraint and conventions of framing have often been stressed): the frame, the narrative placing and the inscription of the subject as the perspective of its intelligibility, cuts short the interminable movement of signifying relations (of the *signifiant*), imposes (subject-in-position) the continuousness of representation.

This continuousness, the effect of framing as the disposition – the *Einstellung* – of the subject, is evident most immediately in the form of the 'continuity' of the sequence-binding of the narrative functions. Festival of affects, a film is equally in the intermittence of its process of images a perpetual metonymy over which narrative lays as a model of closure, a kind of conversion of desire into affectivity as the *direction* of the subject through the image-flow

(representation is much less a fact of the image in film than of the organisation of the images). The specification and distribution of actions as narrative functions prescribes a reading as the operation of their correlation and inscribes a subject as, and for, the coherence of that operation, carried through against the dispersion, the multiple intensities of the text of the film. 99

It is worth pausing for a moment on the problem of this specification in film of actions as elements for insertion into the functional network of the narrative, a problem that can be demonstrated easily enough by considering the difference in this respect between film and novel. In the novel, every action is necessarily specified, distinguished by its notation in language; in film, a host of actions can and do enter while remaining outside of any particular – particularising – notation; film, in other words, allows actions in both a *simultaneity* (in the interrogation scene, Vargas and Quinlan may be engaged in an angry exchange, a detective coming in with a cup of coffee, a policeman on guard by the door looking round, Schwartz watching – all this in shot and at one and the same time where writing, as here, is forced to select and list) and a *multiplicity* ('Vargas answered the phone' is entirely acceptable in a novel as the expression of that action which in the film involves *inter alia* Vargas going towards the phone, stretching out his arm, picking up the receiver, lifting it to his ear and speaking into the mouthpiece; a novel that *included* these constitutive actions would shift attention from the action to the discourse in which it was given, a film that *omitted* them would be an example of *cinéfantastique*). The difference stems, of course, from the respective matters of expression: the photographic image, in the analogical 'perfection' of its reproduction, has a very different status to writing, definingly related to the code(s) of language as analytic construction of reality (to say which is in no way to suggest that the photographic image is not itself taken up in the play of a grip of codes: analogy is constructed, as too its reception: 'under the cover of iconicity, within iconicity, the analogical message *borrow*s the most diverse codes; moreover, resemblance itself is something coded, appealing as it does to the *judgment of resemblance*' Metz, *Essais sur la signification au cinéma II*, p 154). Hence, by contrast with the novel, the relative unspecification of film and the consequent need for a work of specification, for *specification procedures* (modes then of signalling actions, of marking them for functional integration), in order as it were to raise the recording of actions to the level of notation from which, in language, the novel begins. Clearly, such a work finds an initial basis in the very passage from novel to film, from scenario to shooting-script to image track with writing as thus, precisely, the control of the latter; the modes of the realisation of this control in the film are then provided by the various procedures, whether cinematic (for instance shot-scale) or non-cinematic (the notation,

100 the naming, of the action in dialogue or narration over is the simplest and most significant case; the detective with the coffee is caught up into the sense of the film narrative by Quinlan asking him to go for it and complaining afterwards at his failure to come back with some 'sweet-rolls' as well – a subsidiary function, part of the expansion of the narrative of the interrogation, with an additional significance when taken in correlation with a number of other elements scattered throughout the film, Quinlan's character, his obesity, his shabby decline since the days of chili and drink at Tanya's), the specification usually depending on a combination of the two (the coffee-fetching is also marked via the position of the detective's entry in shot).

The full description of these procedures has yet to be done, the analysis of the particular sub-codes of their utilisation in different genres or periods has yet to be attempted. What is crucial – the reason for the present brief reference – is to understand their force as the positioning of the subject on a given action, it given exactly on the return of the subject as the focus of its correlation: an action is a function by virtue of its correlation, correlation is the placing of a subject continuity, specification is the fiction of that place in and across the elements of correlation – the movement being the dialectic of narrative sense.

That sense, the direction of the subject, is carried equally in the terms of the assumption of the functions by the narrative agents. The coherence of the actions is accompanied, *doubled* – as a condition finally of its realisation in the 'novelistic' forms of narrative dominant for us in novel, film and television – by a coherence of character (this indeed has been seen as determining in the continuity of representation: 'a narrative *signifié* only constitutes a constraint for a *signifiant* by imposing on it continuous representation . . . "stories of subjects", "biographies";' Kristeva, 'L'espace Giotto', *Peinture* 2/3, 1972, p 36); totalising, character develops a psychologisation, action as expression, resolution as personal explanation (Quinlan is solely responsible for the narrative of *Touch of Evil*: if only his wife's murderer had been caught . . .), and a thematic enclosure, themes produced and limited as character drama (law and justice balanced over the Quinlan/Vargas conflict and the transfer of Menzies between the two).

It is round character that discussion of the inscription of the subject as position in the filmic system has traditionally centered and the key to the discussion has, of course, been the notion of identification: the spectator identifies with the characters, above all with the hero. There is an obvious and important truth in this conception, both at the level of the character as agent and at that of the character as hero, these levels being related but available for independent description. With regard to the first, we come back

to the previous analysis: a given action is given by its specification as the place of a continuing subject but that continuation depends also – the doubling – on the unity of the conjunction of action and agent, narrative predicate and its ‘subject’, which unity is forged in the passage of identification, in the production, on the grounds of the accepted codes of cultural understanding, of a circle of intelligibility between action, character and spectator, identifying character with action in the projection of the spectator’s comprehension, *his-her* identification, *that* subject place. This primary identification is then the basis for a secondary identification which operates over a network of actions rather than on each individual action and of which the hero is the epitome. The extension from character as agent to character as ‘character’ is restricted in the progress of the narrative to a relatively small set within the overall number of its agents which may well be very much larger, the set establishing the essential space, the series of possible relations, for the working together of action and theme, for the elaboration of the narrative image. In *Touch of Evil*, this set is provided by the conflict between Quinlan and Vargas, with Grandi and Menzies in a pattern of help and opposition and Susan as object (compare the versions of the narrative image offered in section II); the other agents, from say Pancho to Ed Hanson (the detective with the coffee), being more or less characterised, marked by distinguishing traits (the literal meaning of the term ‘character’) and drawn into the thematic space. The hero is then the organisation of set and space in a triumphant unity, the inflection of narrative into destiny and the fixing of the subject in the consciousness of that destiny, moment of totality and thus of resolution (the ultimate position). What is in question in *Touch of Evil* is the division of the hero in the conflict in such a way that the subject is placed at once in the struggle between law and justice (Vargas against Quinlan in an effort towards reharmonisation) and in the character overlay of the struggle between grandeur and poverty (Quinlan against Vargas in so far as the latter is unable to perceive ‘the moral beauty which underlies Quinlan’s warped behaviour’). There is nothing surprising in this split position which answers exactly to the logic of the movement of the filmic system and the strategy of narrative displacement: Vargas against Quinlan resolves the problem that Quinlan against Vargas allows up to the limits of its explanation (the murder of Quinlan’s wife); the split, finally, maintains the unity of the subject in – as – the sense of the narrative: avowal and disavowal, Susan repressed and restored, the touch of evil and the ideal – images, frames, distances, conversions – of defense.

The discussion of character can be rendered more precise by recognising analytically the complex multiplicity it covers in film.

102 by separating out the various elements and specifying their status.

Such an analysis finds its starting-point in the work of Greimas whose linguistic reinterpretation of characters, of the *dramatis personae* in narrative, distinguishes *actants*, units of narrative grammar, and *actors*, units of the discursive realisation of a particular narrative (*Sémantique structurale*, Paris, 1966). Formal elements in a system of relations, the actants can be expressed by a model comprising six units over three pairs of oppositions (subject/object, sender/receiver, helper/opponent); as for the actors, the assumption of the actants in this or that narrative, they are animated entities (anthropomorphic, zoomorphic or whatever – stories where the actions are attributed to objects) susceptible of individuation (being given a mark or name); thus one actant may be realised in a narrative by several actors (a series of individuals, for example, in place as helper) while one actor may syncretise more than one actant (helper and opponent, for example, held together as a struggle ‘in’ or ‘on’ a single individual – Menzies in *Touch of Evil*).

Greimas’s model is envisaged in the perspective of ‘a narrative grammar independent of discursive manifestations’; the manifestation of the actants is the attachment of these pure grammatical units to extended semantic realisations in the space of a discourse. Our concern in the analysis of a filmic system will inevitably be the coherence of the narrative predicates, the set of roles (if ‘role’ is introduced to refer to the semantic specification of actants) and the distribution of actants – and their individuation – in respect of that coherence. Inevitably, but not exhaustively: on the one hand, little is said in the present analysis of the development of individuation as ‘character’ (the psychological thematic of the film is treated only in connection with the functioning of the system); on the other, much needs to be said in excess of that narrative description (with regard to the logic of the narrative economy, the relations between narrative and discourse). The discussion of character (of agency) does, moreover, focus this excess directly, through the multiplicity mentioned earlier. A model for the analysis of film has to take into account the fact of the actor-person (in the film, unlike the novel, the actors of the narrative are also ‘actors’) and in so doing the possibility of a number of shifts that can turn the film in different ways, can determine position. What follows, therefore, is a formulation of the multiplicity of character in film under five category-headings, fixing – provisionally at least – the confusion which arises from the ambiguity of terms such as ‘actor’ and ‘character’.

1. *Agent* – The animated entity (the expression is barbarous but has a useful neutrality) defined in relation to the assumption of a narrative predicate, as the agent of an action. Every action in a film has its agent but this is not to say that the agent must necessarily be ‘shown’ (an action and its agent may be given

2. *Character* – The agent of a series of narrative predicates more or less individuated in relation to their accomplishment; the 'more' being the extension of individuation into characterisation, the demonstration of the individual in respect of a set of 'qualities', a psychological unity. Primary identification is situated in the movement between agent and character; secondary identification in this extension of character.

Common sense suggests that characters are always agents and this is right (consider, once again, primary identification) but it remains the case that, as in the novel, characters are encountered whose whole discursive existence is bound into their characterisation, outside of the assumption of any of the major articulations of the narrative action. Such characters, generally with a certain comic effect (a factor of their narrative irresponsibility?), are 'turns' in the theatrical sense of the word, are 'anecdotal', detached from the narrative action in a kind of narrative of themselves. Hence their dual potential: set off from the narrative, the fixed and delimited pauses of its action, they supplement its movement, simply repeat its meanings in the place it assigns them; marginal to the narrative, to its control, they offer a possible loss, give the narrative back in the images of its work. A good example is provided in *Touch of Evil* by the Night Man with his three appearances. The last of these has him showing Vargas Susan's empty and disordered room and then revealing that the aggressors were the Grandi boys, a piece of information which sends Vargas racing back into town to look for them in Grandi's Rancho Grande; the Night Man, that is, here assumes evident narrative actions (III n). The second involves him with the Grandi boys when they take over the motel and develops the comic effect: the boys jiggling up and down in time to the music blaring out over the loudspeaker system, the Night Man is pulled into the rhythm and begins to jig up and down himself; left to his own devices, he turns down the volume with a triumphant flourish (III c and l – taken together as one appearance in the overall scene of the motel aggression against Susan). With the first, however, the analysis is more complex: totally lacking in any assumption by the Night Man of a consequent narrative action (he is not even there to 'show Susan to her room'; he only appears after she has entered the chalet on her own), it clearly poses him for his role in the last of the scenes and begins the 'character', but it does so beyond the limits of the simple narrative place, as a kind of mirror, its image (II a): the long exchange with Susan, across her body over the words 'bed' and 'sheets' (Still 15), the panic, the jittering outside the chalet, the cut from there to the hand plunging the Linneker detonator and the narrative futility of that entire episode with Farnum (see sections VI and VII) which closes with the feeble whimper of an explosion and Quinlan commenting 'What's wrong,

104 Farnum, you short of dynamite?' (II b); 'the key to this whole thing's the dynamite' – explosion, sizzling stripper, sheets, short of dynamite: all the way to the Night Man's final 'What would I want with a gun?!' (III n) the elements slide together, overturning, running over the narrative and pointing its logic.

The common sense suggestion can also be reversed into the opposite question: are agents always characters? Extension of individuation into 'character' is variable and a minimum specification and hence individuation is given in the very identification of agents as such. The interesting problem in film – a problem that has important implications for political cinema – lies in its use of the *face*, the tendency – of which the close-up is the ultimate mode – to an 'inevitable' individuation round the *expression* of the character (character constructed from this expression); *State of Siege* is an example of a film which runs its political action into the predicament of consciousness, the faces of Bideau-Montand, the drama of expression.

3. *Person* – Mention of the face leads on to the person, the individual body of the 'actor', the figurant of agent and character. It may be agreed that 'the professional actor is someone who possesses the technique of emptying his body to fill it with meaning' (Sylvie Pierre, 'Éléments pour une théorie du photogramme', *Cahiers du cinéma* n 226-227, January-February 1971, p 81), that the actor is absent in person as agent and character, but the crux is precisely the *in person*, the continuing presence of the body (a presence according to the operation of presence in absence described by Metz as fundamental to cinema as 'imaginary signifier').

Film plays between character and person with a variety of emphases which would require an analysis capable of dealing carefully with what is often the circularity of the shifts from one to the other: make-up, costume and so on are ways of absorbing face and body into character significance but have been used consistently in response to the closeness of range allowed by cinema (compare conventional theatre) to bring out face and body in their 'natural' expressivity; typecasting seems to refer to a placing of the person entirely in terms of character, yet it is the insistence of face and body that justifies the type, as for example with an actor like Elisha Cook Jr; the other extreme, apparently, would be provided by the stress on the person over the character, the actor or actress who plays him or herself, Zsa Zsa Gabor in *Touch of Evil*, but here, as the example of Gabor makes clear, the problem is that of the person as persona, the person in its image, which image is filmic (Gabor as a piece of 'pure cinema'), itself then an exhaustion – a conversion – of the body.

There can be no question in the context of this study of attempting the analysis the need for which those brief remarks were simply intended to suggest. The last of the remarks, however,

raises an issue important to the system of *Touch of Evil*, that of the *star*, since the star is exactly the conversion of the body, of the person, into the luminous sense of its film image – Gabor highlighted on the stairs, the silver star a metaphorical literalisation, a token, of her image-status, the perfection of totality (Stills 2 and 3). Such a totality is the fact not of a single film but of film, over, in and between films, reconstituted, confirmed and consecrated in the literature (Metz's 'third machine', the loving prolongation of the good object), the *passage* of the image which is thus always a supplement to the narrative (to agent and character), an addition and a position, the drawing of the narrative into the spectacle of its impersonation, the casting of resolution as that value, that image. Think, in this respect, of *The Towering Inferno* with its clash of architect and fireman, Newman and McQueen, towards the reconstitution – watched by the crooked and the ordinary, the cowardly and the powerless – of the god who lets flow the waters from on high and towards the resolution that reconstitution brings, the final look exchanged, the pact between the two men, the answer of the hero-star, its guarantee.

4. *Image* – The term 'image' may thus be introduced to refer to this conversion of face and body: the body converted into the sense of its image, into its sense as image. Film can reply to narrative problems with the play – with the display – from character to image. Desire in *Touch of Evil* is Susan as Janet Leigh, its attempted stabilisation on the film image, the holding of person and character in that fixation (Still 18).

The example shows clearly what is at stake. The image is the depreciation of the symbolic: the totalising of person, the inscription of the body, and character, the inscription of the narrative movement, into the focus of a homogeneity that allows the confirmation of the film, ratifies the terms of the narrative economy: on the one hand, the woman as the term of a forbidden sexuality, as the term of genitality; on the other, the hero as ideal ego; between the two, the patterns of exchange, the narrative variations and propositions, the restatements of positionality.

The narrative, in other words, has its images of which the image as described here is one: precisely between prohibition and ideal, the narrative places the images of their and its necessity, moments of the fiction of its economy; between Susan and Vargas, the panic, the aggression, the reconstitution (Susan restored), the displacement (Vargas against Quinlan) – so many generators of the images which make up the narrative texture of the film.

5. *Figure* – If the image is a moment of fiction, of coherence, the figure is a point of dispersion, a kind of 'disarticulation', the *end* of the image under pressure of the other.

With regard to the area in which this categorisation is being offered, the figure is a shifting circulation between agent, character, person and image, none of which terms is able to contain, to

106 settle that circulation. The main examples in *Touch of Evil* are furnished by Quinlan and Tanya, Welles and Dietrich. Tanya is the appearance of Dietrich in and out of the narrative, enclosed in chilli house and film image, turned into the elements that overrun the diegetic disposition until the final recovery of the absent Susan (Still 58); image, but another image, the other image to Gabor, the body encumbered, hung with objects (compare Stills 3 and 11); sexualised, but outside the image, in the past, the chilli, Quinlan's archaic history with Tanya in what was once his 'hole-up place', Welles's with Dietrich, Dietrich's with von Sternberg; Zita, Tanya, Titania, fairy queen, lover – 'Better be careful, it may be too hot for you' – and mother – 'Why don't you go home'. Nothing quite holds the figure (the word should be understood according more to its rhetorical than to its pictorial sense), the elements slide in and out of those terms of the narrative representation, unsettling, out of true, of the truth of the narrative resolution; Quinlan has to be got out of Tanya's back into the narrative.

The same extension holds as for the image: the film has its figures of which the figure here described is one possibility; the figure overturns – 'disarticulates' – the image, the fiction, works the narrative with the trace of the cost of its action, the logic of its economy. Tanya answers to the sense of the 'narrative, *but on both sides*'; the figure formed over the film in the system of light and darkness, spectacularisation and obliteration, assures the narrative positions, but exposes that assurance . . .

Inevitably this discussion of the multiplicity of character under five headings has been schematic to a degree which needs to be reduced by further study and analysis. It allows us, however, to come back on the consideration of subject positionality and to specify that positionality, its inscription, with regard to such multiplicity.

The position then of the subject? With 1, the position is the consecution, the continuation, of the narrative action; the subject-correlation as unity of the progress of the film. With 2, it is a question of the transposition of this consecution onto the plane of a psychological-thematic coherence to which character is the key; the subject-identification as operation of this transposition. 1 and 2 found the sense of the film, the *direction* of the subject-receiver. The position of 3 depends on 1 and 2 to which it contributes as the guarantee of the body towards that sense; the subject inscribed as totality in the expressive mirror of the person. 4 is precisely the supreme fiction of the subject, the fixing of the subject on the imaginary other in the specularity of a dual relation: the loving relation – 'love me, for I am lovable' – of the capture of the ideal ego – 'for I am lovable in your image'. With 5, by contrast, the position is that of the division of the subject, the

instance of a process which can only figure as a subject-mobility. 107
the movement – the *jouissance* – of a radical heterogeneity.

The sweep, across and along, from 1 to 4 is the scope of the subject in the film fiction, its coherence; 5 is the problem of the filmic system, the shifting of the subject in the film production, in the friction of economy and logic, narrative and discourse, imaginary and symbolic, the work of the film.

There remains a further category-heading, that of the *author*, the inscription of the cinéaste as an effect of the text – signature as style or thematic repetition (in the context of a series of films). It is not necessary to enter again into details of the variety of the ideas of authorship and of the issues raised by the different conceptions of auteur-theory (see discussion in *Screen* v 14 n 3); suffice it to say that the author as introduced here is distinct from any reference to a subject of expression, a version of which is envisaged by Metz at one stage of *Langage et cinéma*: 'in an original work, the subject which "expresses itself" is a unique and singular being, an individual – while in the banal work this subject is, in reality, a social group, or an anonymous ideology, or an ensemble of collective representations, or an archetype stemming directly from some profound but impersonal psychology, etc (in this conception, the "official author" of a banal work is thus not its true author)' (p 71; *Language and Cinema*, p 94). The author as effect is not this polarisation as individual-expression against social-representation which simply avoids the sociality of the coherence of 'expression', its ideological definition on the 'individual' analysable not simply in the register of the pre-conscious but also in that of the unconscious. When Welles declares 'I hate women but I need them' (cit M Bessy, *Orson Welles: Filmographie complète*, Paris 1970), which is effectively the position of the narrative economy of *Touch of Evil* in the force of its logic (of which the other side is exactly the *impact* of psychoanalysis, developed from the study of hysteria as the articulation of the function historically allocated to woman: sexuality, its prohibition; thus Welles once more: 'I'm fanatically opposed to psychoanalysis. Freud kills the poet in man. Freud kills man's contradictions . . .') Interview, *Etudes cinématographiques* 24-25, p 10), the conclusion is not that the film is the expression of Welles but that it is to be understood in its functioning in relation to an Oedipal logic which is the subject-positioning of film and Welles.

Welles, of course, is in some sense a striking case since, as was mentioned earlier in the analysis of the beginning (section IV), he went to Hollywood in 1939 as 'the author', 'the wonder boy', the 'genius' of the Mercury Theatre company set loose – but at the prompting of Rockefeller as a marketable commodity capable, hopefully, of the financial miracle needed by RKO (there is a good

108 account of the interests involved by Gérard Leblanc, 'Welles, Bazin et la RKO', *Cinéthique* 6, January-February 1970) – in the world of commercial cinema; the career then following the stereotypes of such a definition, of the myth of 'the artist': the initial *chef d'oeuvre*, commercial failure, abandoned projects, interminable wrangles with Hollywood (it is because of a misunderstanding that Universal finds itself allowing him to make *Touch of Evil*), prodigious and restless vitality, etc – Welles as the *author-star*. The result is the stress of a heavily codified style signified as such (the *mark* of expression) and, given so often in the movement between director and actor, of the drama of the artist, the Shakespearianism, the flawed grandeur, everything that Bazin can assemble into the 'Welles thematic'. All this is part of a reading of *Touch of Evil* but is not necessarily important to the analysis of the functioning of the filmic system.

IX

The subject is directed by the movement of the narrative control, is placed in its image; as if the purpose were to hold the process of production, the *énonciation*, onto the product, the *énoncé*, without any gap or loss, in a simple identity in meaning of subject and reality. Achieved, this is the *balance* of narrative and system, the *regulation* of loss in narrative terms; with the perpetual moment of loss the image-flux, the permanence of a discontinuity of intensities (in the novel, it is the tissue of voices, the stereophonic mobility of writing), the task is to cut that flux into the order of narrative and subject-position, setting – moulded, like a jelly, into the form of a clear transparency – what is left as the sign, the guarantee of the presence of Reality: narrative gives the meaning that the photographic image shows to be real. The *énonciation* is the working of the images towards the *énoncé* (specification, organisation, nomination: the grid of representation); to grasp the activity of the filmic system, the film as *text*, is to engage this work, the *margin* of loss – the narrative comes full circle, Susan returns, and the elements spiral over, Tanya turns Susan out of her narrative place.

Filmic system, work and margin, might thus be approached by looking at one or two of the traditional areas of the analysis of narrative organisation and first of all at punctuation. Cinematic punctuation has been analysed as precisely a fact of narrative, as corresponding to paragraphing, chapter division and so on in the novel (Metz, *Essais sur la signification au cinéma II*, pp 115-116). What is crucial is the articulation of the narrative at the decisive points of its advance and the development within the various 'parts' of an easy transition from shot to shot, a continuity

ensured over the simple cuts – the ‘cut’ in this sense occupies the neutral, unmarked position in relation to alternative modes of transition such as dissolve, fade, wipe, iris, etc – by the various established techniques. If we take the initial Tanya sequence (I h) discussed in section V as an example here, we can see on the one hand the fluidity between shots within the sequence and on the other the way in which the sequence is given its individual unity as sequence: Shot 1 is preceded by the vitriol throwing in the street which ends with a shot of Vargas walking back towards Menzies having failed to catch Risto and then exiting left into camera – from there, a marked cut shows Quinlan inside the cabaret (indicatively, Vargas is ‘lost’ to the sequence that begins here); Shot 27 is immediately followed by a crane shot of Vargas crossing the high street from right to left towards camera – the sequence is brought out in the rhyme of its articulation: losing Vargas/finding Vargas (his direction of movement picked up again), dark/light/dark (street into the cabaret and then Tanya’s and then back into the street, though a fuller description would need to look at the passage across the street within the sequence), camera fixity/camera movement/ /camera fixity/camera movement (the camera is fixed for Vargas’ exit before Shot 1 which holds the fixity for a brief moment and then sweeps into a long tracking shot down the bar; the camera is fixed for Tanya’s exit left into camera after Quinlan in Shot 27 and the following shot fixes Vargas for a brief moment before sweeping into a pan that ends on Pancho with the torch and Susan, as the travelling down the bar had ended on Quinlan facing Zsa Zsa Gabor – demonstrating the marking out of the sequence, one also inevitably demonstrates the play across of elements, the movements of exchange).

Punctuation, then, assures continuity and order and thus the position of the subject: it *appoints* the reader, the spectator. This is the effect – the *necessity* – of the introduction of punctuation in writing: the ‘invention’ of Aristophanes of Byzantium, it is only with printing, with the book, that punctuation is stabilised, changing from a foundation in the shifting encounter of voice and text to that of a logic of truth and of the subject inscribed as the relation of that truth, in its perspective (whence the various projects for a universal punctuation, all languages being supposed reducible to the same single structure of truth). Without punctuation there is neither author nor simple coherence of reader; nothing but a skein of voices, outside the order of a univocal source of destination or reception. Transposed from writing to film, the idea of punctuation describes exactly this order of the subject, the position of narrative sense.

Yet sense and position, order and subject are as it were the *counter* of the work of their production, the defence against and the exchange – the representation – for, are themselves punctuated in the terms of their movement (a discourse is always more than

110 its message and the 'more' is the logic of that economy): the filmic system is at once a text with punctuation, the narrative homogeneity, and a punctuation without text, the radical heterogeneity of the discursive operation; castration is rejected from the plenitude of subject and Reality to reappear already in the erraticism of the real. In psychoanalysis, such a reappearance is specified as the effect of relations of resistance without transference, as hallucination in the face of the foreclosure of castration from symbolisation (and so the blocking of transference); the Wolf Man case history provides a detailed account. ('In the end there were to be found in him two contrary currents side by side, of which one abominated the idea of castration, while the other was prepared to accept it and console itself with femininity as a compensation. But beyond any doubt a third current, the oldest and deepest, which did not as yet even raise the question of the reality of castration, was still capable of coming into activity', Freud going on to link this with 'a hallucination which this same patient had at the age of five . . . ' Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol XVII, p 85). In film, the problem is posed differently – as was stressed from the outset, the analysis of the filmic system demands an understanding of the process of the construction of the subject (the area of psychoanalysis) but grasped in relation to the modalities of the *replacement* of that construction in the specific signifying practice (the area of semiotics) – with regard to the aim at homogeneity; the symbolisation of the film holds out against castration in respect of the coherence of the subject it inscribes but that inscription in turn holds out already against the pressure of the symbolic it displaces: it is this which has been called the margin of loss, the overturning of the film, the activity of the text and which gives, ceaselessly, another scene, that of production, another punctuation, that of the subject in process, in displacement from the narrative displacement-replacement. As for examples, the whole of the present analysis in its description of the sliding chains of elements, the movement in figures, has been no more than a catalogue of such 'moments'. If a quick indication is wanted, however, look simply at Stills 30 and 31 on top of one another: from the first to the second the narrative continues (Quinlan prepares to kill Grandi in the interests of the plot against Susan) but the substitution of gun for caressing arm over Susan's body (same shot, same scale, same position), Quinlan in the woman's place, repunctuates, says more; more that is there again from Stills 34 to 35, Susan for Grandi (same scale, same angle, same position), the ecstatic fulfilment of the strangling. Everywhere the narrative advance *makes figures*.

This figuring of the narrative can equally be traced in point of view. Film, narrative film, determines the position of the subject

in a continuous third-person within which the primary identification operates the intelligibility of the separation. The third-person – written as N in the breakdown of the two Tanya segments in section V: narrative and neutral, unmarked – is then doubled, however, with the possibility of an accompanying character point of view: the subject is placed in the third-person which is put in the perspective – as the place – of one of the narrative agents. No doubt that formula is cumbersome, but there is reason for insisting on the idea of a doubling over, for not simply equating subject position and character perspective: fully ‘subjective’ images, shots where the vision is subsumed entirely as a first-person are rare in classic cinema (a fortiori the first-person as overall assumption of the narrative organisation – limited to such ‘aberrations’ as *The Lady of the Lake*) and, when they do occur, are generally signified by the strangeness of some (subsequently explicable) distortion (the blurred image of Gutman in *The Maltese Falcon* which is the visual experience of the *drugged* Spade just before he collapses); the camera is modelled to reproduce the position, the neutrality, of the observer eye and film, unlike the novel, can distinguish an ‘I’ in only two ways (on the image track; other matters of expression may allow further distinctions, as for example by narration over): character abnormality – subjective distortion – or author demonstration – stylistic deviation in extreme formal devices such as tilts, unusual angles and so on (this, which is the decorative inscription of Welles as ‘artist’ in *Touch of Evil*, according to the convention that ‘individuality’ equals ‘style’ which equals ‘deviation from the norm’). Hence the N position appears as a constant in the analysis of the two segments, being varied – accompanied – by its relation at certain points to a particular point of view; even in shot-reverse-shot dialogue, the position inscribed for the spectator is not exactly *in* the place of the character off (how often does the character on directly centre into camera, to ‘us’) but rather by the side, in addition (the addition of continuity): T/N for I h Shot 8 (Still 9) is the expression of an example of this; elsewhere, more obviously, the vision is over the shoulder of, as in I h Shot 11 (Still 11) thus written N/Q.

Narrative control depends on the maintenance of subject continuity in the N position and on the sense of the variation over that position of character point of view (with its counterpart in shot in the arrangement of the character looks – this having received extensive attention in the work of Bellour since the essay on *The Birds*), ‘sense’ here meaning the rhyming coherence of the organisation of those variations, their *resolution* by the kind of systematisation described in tabular form in the account of the Tanya segments (section V).

It was also mentioned in that account how the passage into Tanya’s was the risk of a loss of perspective, the subject placed in the position of an absence (I h Shot 6, Still 7), the character –

112 Quinlan – in a vacancy (the narrative vacation), which must be made up, re-narrativised, the character reclaimed (IV e Shot 22, Still 47), the subject repositioned through Menzies with Vargas (IV e Shot 26, Still 50; Shot 28, Still 52) for the final showdown, the establishment of the truth, the achievement of the narrative reconvergence (Quinlan confesses, Vargas regains Susan). It is in this loss of perspective nevertheless that point of view produces its figures, is disturbed and disturbs. Once again, analysis needs to be carried on in detail across the whole film but it can be focussed quickly, for example, as those moments when the subject position becomes – is interrupted as – the sudden emptiness of the image, its impossibility, the subject dropped *below* the image as the abruptness of an intolerable violence: the dismembered body of Linneker, Zita's to the side, as first the Doctor ('now you can strain him through a sieve') then Marcia (how to identify? 'I guess that's my father', 'I'm not acquainted with my father's girl-friends' I d) look down to us; Susan under the bar of the image (Still 25), for obliteration, for the guarantee of a totality filled with itself, the shut-off for a narcissism where she, and subject, are no more than a pure reflection of its aggression (Still 27, III l); Susan raped and annihilated, the subject caught in the gaze, under the gaze of the triumph, the jubilation of that aggression in turn (Still 36, IV a); simply a rapid indication of a part of a chain, but between these 'moments' something moves, again the narrative *figures*.

X

To analyse the filmic system is to follow narrative and figures, economy and logic, the shifting regulation, the placing of the subject and the displacements on which that depends. Such an analysis, inevitably, cannot maintain the division between cinematic and non-cinematic, which it constantly transgresses in response to the *work* of the text. Propositions, exchanges, figures straddle the different matters of expression as so many shifters from code to code, rendering difficult the construction of the filmic system by analysis in a strict allegiance to that division. Zita burns up in the explosion, the sign over the cabaret reads '20 sizzling strippers', Vargas struggles with Risto and the vitriol sizzles over the photo of Zita burnt to obliteration again before our eyes: part of a chain that mobilises writing, photographic image and recorded noise, specific (the framing/movement rhythm of the exploding car) and non-specific (language – 'sizzling') codes.

Metz himself indicates the break in analysis from cinema to film: 'Each film shows us the cinema, and is also its death'. Here is that *singularity* of the textual system on which Metz so often insists; if the 'study of a singular filmic system is never a study of cinematic specificity' (*Langage et cinéma*, p 71; *Language and Cinema*, p 97), it is precisely because the film is on the side

of the heterogeneous, because its work cannot be grasped by a simple inventory of codes, it poses analysis new tasks, a new object: 'The only principle of relevancy capable of defining, at present, the semiotics of film is – in addition to its application to the filmic rather than to the cinematic fact – the desire to treat films as texts, as units of discourse, consequently forcing itself to study the different systems (whether they are or are not codes) which give form to these texts and are implicit in them' (ibid p 14; p 21). 113

System or systems? Developed in *Langage et cinéma* in terms of 'the ultimate (or first?) principle of unification and intelligibility' (p 75; p 100) and allowing for a certain plurality – the rivalry of the number of global readings of a film – the notion of textual system is subsequently conceived in an attention to a ceaseless systematising activity, the force of an endless production of 'poussées significationnelles'; thus it becomes a question not of a system, the expression of single overall coherence, nor even of several, the sum of different readings, but of systematicity – 'something always of a structural and relational (but not necessarily exhaustible) order' ('The Imaginary Signifier', in this number of *Screen*, p 35). It is such a movement of relations which has been understood in this analysis as the filmic system.

How then is the analysis of the film system to be carried through? 'What gives us the most central access to the textual system is no doubt the relation between the two sets of elements, cinematic and script, rather than the ones, the others, or their addition' (ibid p 39). The postulate is powerful but also difficult; the present analysis has not been able to 'centre' the filmic system in that way, to hold to the clarity of division and relation between cinematic and non-cinematic or between cinematic and scenaristic. Raising problems – terms – of film analysis, attempting to understand the functioning of *Touch of Evil* as filmic system, the two together in a kind of dialectical effort, we have done no more than suggest some critical areas, some directions, some points of departure between narrative and production, economy and logic. Access to the filmic system – its experience – is to pull the film in this dual construction, continuity and discontinuity, homogeneity and the heterogeneity it contains, position and process. It is from there that the film can be posed as system, that the terms of analysis can be disengaged; problems of the work of the film, of its position – multiple, mobile – as the death of cinema.

Errata and Addenda: In *Screen* v 16 n 1: p 40 l 46, for Still 19 read Still 20; p 40 l 48, for Still 55 read Still 56; pp 54-55, Still 10 should appear under Shot 9; pp 46-47, music is used in 3B.15 and 17 (saxophone dying in volume); p 36 l 13, questioned by the Customs Official as to her nationality, Zita seems to reply that she is not American, later, however, Quinlan talks of 'two Americans' having been blown up (I d) – the ambiguity serves the film: Zita and Susan are the same but different, the one the other side of the other as desire and position.

Edited by Alan Lovell

Response and Knowledge in Film Education

The interest of the recently published Penguin film book, *Six European Directors* by Peter Harcourt, is its bearing on *Screen's* contention that theoretical, critical and educational practices are virtually linked – that each produces and is reproduced by the others with crucial consequences for the ensuing film culture. These connections have for a long time been more a matter of conviction and assertion than of concrete analysis, but SEFT has produced *Screen* in the belief that an intervention on the theoretical front was vital for the growth of a film culture in Britain, both in terms of stimulating critical practice and in providing the resources for an educational strategy. Recent changes in our companion journal *Screen Education* mark some consequences of that policy, namely our now urgent need to understand the connections previously asserted and to analyse the implications of our theoretical investigations not simply for the constitution of a subject area – Film Study – but for the practice of education itself. Given these concerns, what is interesting in *Six European Directors* is that it not only constitutes a continuation of the debate between Robin Wood and Alan Lovell (*Screen* v 10 nn 2, 3, March/April 1969, May/June 1969 and v 11 n 4/5 July/October 1970), favouring personal response against conceptual knowledge – but overtly seeks a justification of this position by conflating the role of critic with that of teacher. Thus the book provides a case-study of the kind of ideological connections we must clarify if we are to extend our theoretical concerns into education practice.

Six European Directors, the introduction tells us, is the outcome of the author's lectures, teaching and critical writing during the last ten years. As such it is not so surprising that its format is that of six *auteur* studies, although one might have expected, given the present critical climate, that the introduction would take some position on the *auteur* theory. More notable, considering the concerns of Anglo-Saxon critical and educational work over the last ten years, is the lack of any characterisation of the European director in relation to his Hollywood counterpart. But the most

serious omission is that of any attempt to clarify the problems involved in the book's subtitle, 'Essays on the Meaning of Film Style', or how these are to be solved through the director study. The 'Note on Film Style' appended at the end denies that such concepts as 'meaning' or 'style' are problematic at all by moving directly into a comparison of the motifs employed by each director in an attempt to sum up the 'feel' of his work. At most, 'style' is treated as a projection of the director's personality.

This lack of interest in theoretical questions is not surprising given Peter Harcourt's critical position. The central tenet of his 'critical method' is that the critical act is concerned with, and is itself an act of, response. Response, feeling and experience are key notions here, and they are opposed to knowledge, intellect and scholarship. An art object is like a living being with its own subjectivity; the critic's subjectivity is moved by and moves out to the art object, a process that Harcourt compares to falling in love with a woman. The task of the critic-teacher is then to understand his response – which he does by testing it out in the class-room – and to cultivate response in those who for whatever reason fall down in this capacity. We can see intermeshed here many of the critical and educational trends that have dominated humanities teaching for the last forty years.

F R Leavis's insistence on close analysis of individual art products led to a concentration on literary texts in the English curriculum and the replacement of their surrounding scholarship by practical criticism. Although in his own practice this drew on a close attention to the functioning of language, Leavis's attitude to the relation between form and content, art and experience was ambiguous. Ultimately – perhaps because of his concern to make literary criticism a platform for cultural survival – the artist's experience came to have most importance. Comparing Joyce with Shakespeare, for example, Leavis wrote:

'Mr Joyce's liberties with English are essentially unlike Shakespeare's. One insists, it can hardly be insisted too much, that the study of a Shakespeare play may start with the words; but it was not with these that Shakespeare – the great Shakespeare – started: the words matter because they lead down to what they came from. He was in the early wanton period, it is true, an amateur of verbal fancies and ingenuities, but in the mature plays . . . it is the burden to be delivered, the precise and urgent command from within, that determines expression – tyrannically' (*Scrutiny*, 1933).

The development of Leavis's ideas, and their use in education – particularly in the teaching of English and popular culture – needs careful and detailed examination. However it would appear that by the 1950's and early 1960's their influence had contributed to a radicalisation of English teaching which collapsed text into experi-

116 ence, practical criticism into personal response and exhibited extreme antagonism to the rest of the curriculum, now seen as instilling dead knowledge and materialistic facts aimed towards jobs and careers and *earning* a living.

It is instructive to look at Peter Harcourt's presentation of the activities of the 'critic-teacher' against this background and in the context of the debate about humanities teaching in recent years. The opposition between knowledge and response crystallises in an extreme form somewhat removed from its Leavisite origins, for now education itself is seen as a potential enemy of the genuine personal response: 'The educationalist or critic here has a delicate job to do, a job requiring great tact if he is not to destroy the purity with which we can quite unconsciously be enthralled by what we see on the screen . . .' (p 32). The vocabulary of contamination is significant, for it becomes evident that a part of Harcourt's insistence on the personal is a fear of ideology. Knowledge brings with it reasons for choosing one thing rather than another, it offers a means of constructing a view of the world, of one's place in it and commitment to it: 'But as the process of formal education begins, filters are slipped in front of the mind. Experiences become increasingly screened, and strong imaginative preferences begin to assert themselves' (p 11).

This cult of experience is based on an epistemology very different from the Leavisite position and indicates a new anti-intellectual virulence. For although Leavis explicitly rejected Marxism as a theoretical base for the humanities in favour of the universal truths of human nature, he did not banish the social as a force in his schema of personal values. The individual was responsible to others, the organic community provided an image of a possible society, tradition furnished a kind of knowledge and an ideological foundation for individual growth and choice – as is seen to a marked extent in the film criticism of Robin Wood and to a lesser degree in that of Victor Perkins. Peter Harcourt, however, takes his values from the phenomenology and existentialism popularised in the 1960's and seeks to dissociate himself from the more social side of the Leavis canon:

'If art is ordered reality . . . then criticism can evaluate the nature of the *order* with some confidence, but nowadays must be less certain about the nature of the *reality*. . . In criticism the tone I most admire is that of an inquiring tentativeness, reflecting the difficulties of knowing with certainty anything at all in a world in which the traditional values have either gone soft and hypocritical or else have actually died away' (pp 17-18).

Within this kind of position knowledge is an impossibility; personal response is all there can be. In so far as Harcourt is prepared to admit knowledge into film education, it is merely to enable teacher and student to dwell on their responses more fully: 'The

point of teaching or writing about art at all is that through discussion with others we can possibly refine our own response, certainly our *understanding* of our own responses' (p 16). Ignorance becomes a kind of Edenic state in which we can be most sure of the authenticity and truth of our feelings: 'the *less* we know about the culture from which a given film springs, the more we might instinctively respond to the inner form of the work itself, undistracted by familiar surface details' (p 20). It is also a state in which we are vulnerable to whatever 'ism' happens to be current – an implication Harcourt does not consider.

Clearly the kind of theoretical activity that has been introduced into the humanities and cultural studies in recent years is very threatening to this outlook. Harcourt at one point comes close to suggesting areas of knowledge that would be relevant to an understanding of film as a cultural practice, but wards the danger off by resorting to the 'mysteries of response':

'Why it is that a given . . . work of art "speaks" to us in this immediate way *has* to remain a mystery. . . . It has to do as well with the assumptions of our culture and the way we learn to *read* experiences within a given time and place. It may also have to do with the mysteries of psychological types . . .'

(p 13 – *italics mine*).

What becomes clear in the essays that follow is that Harcourt's 'critical method' is bound up with the readings he makes of his chosen directors' work, the world he constructs as an *auteur* critic. For at the centre of each director's work he finds a lonely, insecure individual, whose only possible consolation can be to accept the impossibility of a real relation to others, of ever knowing anything with certainty, of any ultimate meaning or morality. This makes for some rather eccentric results. Eisenstein is valued principally for *Ivan the Terrible*, his silent work being compared to Pudovkin for otherwise typically Bazinian reasons; and where he does discover more positive assertions of friendship and generosity, as in Renoir, this is explained as nostalgia and a kind of moral ambiguity, for friends, enemies, and villains are bound to be treated alike by Renoir. The key terms of this world-view are 'loneliness', 'insecurity', 'isolation', 'irrationality', 'ambiguity', 'despair' – the existentialist canon. This orientation gives added significance to Harcourt's rejection of Eisenstein's theoretical work as a waste of talent, and to his attempt to separate him critically from the political upheavals of the time, as also to his dismissal of Godard's post-'68 work: 'In films like *Le Gai Savoir*, *One Plus One*, and *Le Vent d'Est*, there is no longer any inner life to impinge upon. The riflemen have triumphed. The human world has been destroyed. Art and beauty and the painful uncertainties of human love are no more' (p 249).

Nevertheless Harcourt has a problem in using feeling as an escape from knowledge, society and ideology. For he recognises that the

118 individual has to possess a set of predilections if he is to make any kind of perception or response at all and this personal 'bias' can easily become 'prejudice'. The critic-teacher then finds himself in the ridiculous position of having to encourage suspension of prejudice and develop his students' understanding without anyone being aware of the encroachment of knowledge into the classroom:

'In the effort to reach students (or readers) who have been less affected by the same experience he must strive to make them more conscious of these elements of form without making the others self-conscious at the same time. . . . One draws attention to them always at the risk of an interference with a private response, a private and mysterious response to the world created on the screen' (pp 32 and 37).

Although the references to Merleau-Ponty and R D Laing might appear to give some kind of respectable foundation to a liberalism characteristic of our culture, Harcourt's attempt to justify it in educational terms simply serves to expose some of the main dangers of what was in the 1960's seen as a radicalisation of education by the humanities. Not only is the distinction between intellect and feeling false – Harcourt's one use for knowledge is that it 'may lead us through the superficialities of an intellectual curiosity . . . to a deeper, more personal involvement' (p 21), as if curiosity was not a personal response; but the demand for feeling can be more of an imposition than knowledge (cf the endless series of anthology titles moving from *Reflections*, *English Through Experience* to *Impact*, *Conflict* etc. in search of ever bigger and better response). For knowledge is common property, open to public investigation. It has its own motive power – intellectual curiosity, collectivity, engagement, action. Response is, as Harcourt insists, private, personal, isolated. In the classroom situation, the crucial question is whose response? Peter Harcourt makes very clear what is concealed behind all these anthology titles:

'In the classroom, therefore, the critic-teacher has the opportunity to test his ability to *describe* a given work of art in a way that gains some measure of agreement from the group, and then to talk of *how he feels about it* as a somewhat separate matter, inviting the students to accept his description, or so refine it that, in the case of film, both teacher and students have an agreed description of what has happened on the screen. The students can *then* offer their own responses, responses that will no doubt be different from his, representative as they are of their own cultures and age-groups, of their own different experiences of life' (p 14 – last italics mine).

Children and most students will in fact provide the teacher with what they think he wants. When humanities teachers moved the emphasis in educational activity away from thinking, learning and

knowing to feeling, responding and creative self-expression, in the interests of 'relevance' and 'experience', they fell into the trap of assuming the innocence and authenticity of childhood, at the same time putting themselves into a position of insidious power. For it is the teacher who decides what is or is not the valid and authentic experience or response.

In this light Harcourt's implicit rejection of the work that has been done to develop a set of concepts and analytical tools with which to understand the various technical and aesthetic operations that go into the construction of a film is doubly perverse. For if the critic is concerned with his response, and he is also a teacher, what he brings to the classroom is not knowledge about how film works which could be *used* by the students, but a verbalisation of his response, 'descriptions he might offer as in some way *standing for* the particular film' (p 14). Cary Bazalgette has pointed very clearly to the disservice such an educational strategy does in her description of the enormous problems facing CSE children in their teachers' demand for response:

'Any response, however instinctive, is based on a subconscious understanding of stylistic conventions: why is it better for this understanding to remain subconscious? . . . I would also suggest that in many classrooms the response that is sought is *not* necessarily the students' immediate emotional response, but one that is acceptable to the teacher, and that is based on sets of definitions already offered by the teacher, eg "what does this tell us about the war?" . . . But if students are not trained to ask basic questions about the images which confront them, if they are not asked to examine the knowledge and assumptions which they already possess, they are being denied the opportunity to develop the most simple and essential critical tools. They are being trained instead to accept given definitions and, very often, given moral postures as well. They are in fact being specifically trained *not* to articulate their own responses' (*Screen Education* n 10/11, Spring/Summer 1974, p 14).

In the figure of Harcourt's critic-teacher one can see very clearly how the initially radicalising concern for 'experience' and 'personal response' in the humanities, when combined with a fear of ideological commitment and desire for consensus, becomes potentially repressive. When art works, women, young minds are enshrined in the realm of the personal and the unknowable their own activity is limited to providing the critic-teacher with a perpetual reflection of his own subjectivity. A stable world is maintained in which teachers and critics are protected from ideas, challenge and action, the women who could do better (cf the dedication to a woman 'who could have improved everything'), don't and the classrooms remain filled with attentive students.

CHRISTINE GLEDHILL.

Two aspects of *The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock* by Raymond Durnat are of special interest to *Screen* readers. The first is Durnat's reading strategies in respect of the films, the second, Hitchcock's significance within the British pre-war cinema, a topic which is embedded in the text at various points.

Durnat's critical style, his reading method, depends upon an extremely extensive knowledge of film history and a speculative turn of mind. As he suggests, 'a film is like an iceberg; one-tenth of it exists on the screen, the other nine-tenths in the spectators' minds'. The films are treated as triggers to the imagination and his reading is frequently pushed towards the 'delirium of interpretation' – his own phrase – in which the free and often riotous play of the imagination governs. The ambiguities of the visual image, the polysemic character of film, are recognised and problematic features of cine-signification, but we might argue that Durnat exploits these features rather than recognising them as problems. Indeed, his reading strategy depends, for much of the time, on the fertility of his imagination rather than the fertility of the images. It is this 'impressionistic' trajectory that leads him, at times, to abandon the film he is actually writing about in favour of his own reworking of the plot as when he offers a new version of *Champagne* (1928) to bring it into line with today's sensibilities. This tendency culminates in his remarks on *The Pleasure Garden* (1925), Hitchcock's first feature:

'It would be interesting to exclude the inferior material, re-edit the realistic moments into a sort of kernel film, and see the result; perhaps when the cassette revolution eventually transpires critics and others will be able to offer their variations on a theme.'

It is this tendency towards speculative interpretation that makes it difficult to regard Durnat's procedures as reading at all. It also makes any confrontation of his interpretation with alternative readings a rather pointless exercise in which reference to the film-text itself could only supply one-tenth of the evidence.

There is, however, another aspect of speculative criticism in which Durnat's imaginative play is constrained by his detailed knowledge of film history. During his discussion of Hitchcock's version of O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*, he notes the various affinities between this film and the developing Hollywood gangster film and offers the following speculation:

'A few years later and Hitchcock or BIP might have been tempted to open out the play in such a way as to give it something in common with the gangster film, in which, at this point, immigrant-class families and mothers did loom large.'

This kind of speculation, this mixture of knowledge and insight, which suggests potential areas of study, is found throughout the

text, always remaining undeveloped and often, unfortunately, 121
swamped by the next flow of creative interpretation. At a number of points in the book, in fact, the insights have a subversive potential, questioning some of the central postulates of the thesis. For example, one of the major central assumptions, as I have mentioned before, is that of authorship. The films are treated as creations of Hitchcock, though Durnat does acknowledge that there are a number of difficulties in the simplistic formulations of the 'theory'. Thus he writes:

'Extreme *auteur* theory . . . has taught us a great deal, and among the things it should have taught us is the extent to which a man's art may be inspired by the irresolvable, insurmountable, and inescapable contradictions and incoherences between contradictory instinctual drives, social aims and value systems.'

It remains unclear as to why 'extreme *auteur* theory' should have taught us that contradiction and inconsistency occur in the cinema, but nevertheless it does seem that here Durnat is grappling with the notion that 'a man's art' concerns a struggle with signs and sign-systems which may continually evade the supposed controlling intention or will of the 'artist'. *Auteurist* criticism, though recognising this, is likely to conclude that such inconsistency results in part from the volatility of the director's psychic undergrowth, and, in part, from a failure of genius, vision or talent. In those terms, the debate is about the director/*auteur*'s management of his consciousness, and not about managing the problems of signification in the cinema. The latter orientation would depend upon recognising that the work of the film-maker uses materials (images/sounds) which are already charged with a multiplicity of meanings which can be underlined (remarked), or effectively suppressed by the film-maker, and by a great many other factors. Accordingly, film-makers succeed or fail depending upon their knowledge of signs and meaning in the cinema rather than their 'genius' or 'talent' or whatever.

The second aspect of the book concerns the British cinema in general, and the role of Hitchcock within that cinema. There is a general conception that Hitchcock is the most important director to emerge from the British film industry, an industry that has not, despite its often ambitious organisational structure, produced a satisfying cinema. As Truffaut remarks in his interviews with Hitchcock, there is 'a certain incompatibility between the terms "cinema" and "Britain"'. The notion continues that Hitchcock's genius or talent enabled him to transcend the general mediocrity of the British cinema and, to confirm this, he was swept off to Hollywood in the late 1930's by David Selznick where he has been an enormously successful commercial film director. Hitchcock is, therefore, a kind of artistic aberration in terms of his native cinema, an American director designate during the twenties and thirties,

122 the exception to prove the rule that the British commercial film industry has failed, producing neither good popular art (like Hollywood) nor sophisticated 'art' cinema (like France and Italy). Durnat's book contains a number of interesting remarks which taken together and explored in detail could offer perspectives on the British cinema, and even begin the mammoth task of understanding that cinema, of penetrating the assumptions which lie behind its critical rejection. A rejection, incidentally, which Durnat himself may be exempted from given the number of times he has written on the subject.

Hitchcock entered the film industry in 1920 during times of crisis. During World War One, the American film industry had moved into a dominating position in the European market and British producers like Pearson and Hepworth, who had been working since the earliest days of the industry, were faltering in the changed conditions, while younger men like Michael Balcon and Harry Bruce Woolfe were entering the industry with new ideas about film production. As Rachel Low says:

'The trouble with the older companies was that, faced with the difficulties in getting capital or a wide market, they allowed themselves to think that films financed cheaply on a pre-war scale could survive in the post-war world. The higher cost of the films coming over from America meant, in fact, a completely different style of production' (*History of the British Film 1918-29*, Allen & Unwin).

In addition to this industrial ferment, the 1920's saw an interest in the cinema being cultivated by the educated, by the intelligentsia who, previously, had displayed a contempt for the medium. Now these two aspects of British film culture in the 1920's, the industrial/commercial and the artistic, provide interesting and illuminating parameters for a consideration of Hitchcock's work. Firstly, we can align his work to the general artistic developments in the European 'art' cinema of the 1920's, the kind of cinema in which British intellectuals were taking an interest. As Durnat observes, 'within the ultra-professional Hitchcock there is always an avant-gardist never quite struggling to get out,' and indeed we may point to three aspects of his silent work which correlate with cinematic practice elsewhere. Firstly, a number of passages from his films which are extremely similar to the avant-garde film experiments being made in France at this time (eg *Downhill*, 1927), secondly, the marked influence of German Expressionism in films like *The Lodger*, 1926 (reflecting his experiences in the UFA studios in Munich where he made his first two films for Balcon), and thirdly, his preference for 'pure cinema' which he defines in terms of montage, and which reflects the influence of Eisenstein and Pudovkin. Yet, despite this, in the mid-1920's Hitchcock went to work for the burgeoning John Maxwell empire, British International

Pictures, the most professionalised of British film companies, the most business-orientated. The most interesting parts of the book are in the opening chapters where Durnat is attempting to situate this artist/intellectual in the context of the industry, and to comprehend the films in terms of this context. He also attempts to survey the various critical responses to Hitchcock in relation to these groupings, in relation to the production history of the films. He notes three 'British Hitchcocks', thus countering the conventional notion of Hitchcock as simply a director of 'picaresque comedy thrillers'. In addition to the better known films like *The Thirty-nine Steps* which were made mainly for Balcon while he was Director of Production for Gaumont British during the 1930's, Durnat isolates Hitchcock's romantic subjects (from his first Gainsborough period, 1925-27) and a number of literary and dramatic adaptations which characterise his time at British International Pictures, 1927-32. During this latter period, Hitchcock was able 'to cast a wry and inquisitive eye over various facets of the British scene', and by doing so to attract the attention of John Grierson who regarded Hitchcock as 'the best director, the slickest craftsman, the sharpest observer and the finest master of detail in all England,' and even went so far as to suggest that, in 1930, 'the future of the British cinema rests very much in Hitchcock's hands'. It may seem strange to hear the father of documentary lauding the master of suspense but, in fact, numerous passages from Hitchcock's work in the 1920's prefigure the documentary films of the 1930's. For example, the openings from *The Lodger* (1926), *The Manxman* (1928) and *Blackmail* (1929) could be documentaries of the newspaper industry, the fishing industry and the police force respectively. As Durnat says, 'Hitchcock's creative shifts and turns bear some relationship to these producer periods,' but he does not probe the implications of the remark. The distinction between Hitchcock's work for Balcon and his work for John Maxwell, though complicated by certain films like *Blackmail* which would fit more easily into his Balcon work but was made for Maxwell, is tenable as a rough schema, and could be the basis for an extensive examination of the British film industry of the 1920's and 30's. Durnat, however, does not seem interested in the significance of many of the questions he suggests in throwaway remarks which bear upon broad film production issues. For example, when he writes parenthetically of Asquith, 'What Asquith might have done in the way of Hitchcockery and more had Balcon not neglected him during those critical years.' Or, concerning matters of technique and technology as in the following passage about *Juno and the Paycock*:

'Juno seems particularly lacking in dollyshots, and tends to restrict any depth in groupings to long shot, which suggests problems with sound equipment and shallow-focus lenses analogous to those

124 with which Renoir was grappling. But whereas the French situation gave the director and his creative *équipe* an ascendancy over the technicians, in England the balance between the system and the artist was less favourable to the innovations required to master the new techniques and for once Hitchcock, the redoubtable technical thinker, was unable to impose himself.'

Like much of Durnat's writing, this book is studded with under-developed insights, with random condensed comments on numerous aspects of film history, theory and criticism, though these are, at times, all but submerged by his imaginative and often eccentric readings of the individual films. Perhaps one ought to adapt Durnat's proposed strategy for *The Pleasure Garden* which I quoted earlier, and exclude the inferior material, re-edit the interesting moments into a sort of kernel book, and see the result.

TOM RYALL.

Facts

Sociology is about facts, social facts, and social facts are an eminently serious and professional kind of thing; film is not facts, certainly not social facts: it is illusion, imagination, neither serious nor, a fortiori, sociological. A joke? Not quite. This year the Cambridge Social and Political Sciences Committee rejected a student's proposal for a final examination dissertation entitled 'Female employment in the USA in the twentieth century: the connections between its changes, the "pin-money" attitude to that employment and the development and reflection of such an attitude in the American cinema' on the unargued grounds of the impossibility of a study of the depiction of women in film being 'either theoretically sensible (sic) or empirically practicable'. The rejection letter goes on, in a barely veiled threat, to make it clear that film is out of the question: 'The implication is that if you were willing to drop it there would be no difficulty.' *Screen* readers will certainly see the implication and draw their own conclusions.

DIRK HYAM.

Women in the Media Industries

Patterns of Discrimination Against Women in the Film and Television Industries (ACTI, 1975) is the latest in a series of detailed reports to have been undertaken by the Association of Cinematograph and Television Technicians in recent years, and viewed in terms of the paucity of serious research on women's work in specific sectors of industry, the Report is by far the most com-

prehensive and informed to have been produced within the trade union movement so far. The ACTT, in fact, was one of the first unions to secure equal pay for women workers, achieving it in the late 1930's, but as the Report suggests, equal pay agreements have done little substantially to alter the real position of women in the industry. The Report traces the deterioration of their situation over the last twenty years, with the proportion of women in total membership declining from 17.8 per cent twenty years ago to 14.8 per cent today, despite the tremendous growth in television production during this period. (The employment of women workers has declined most sharply in the laboratories and in film production.) The Report itself marks the culmination of over two years' struggle by women within the union at shop floor level for an investigation into discrimination in the industry and for the appointment of a full-time research officer, Sarah Benton, to study the question in depth.

Examining the structure of employment over the last twenty years, the Report shows that at the beginning of the period women worked in a wide variety of grades within the industry, while now they work in special 'sexual ghettos', the distinction between 'men's work' and 'women's work' having become more and more rigid since the Second World War. At the present time there are no women workers at all in half of the existing grades, and the proportion of women in a further 12 per cent of grades is less than 1 in 10. Three out of five women in the industry work in three grades only, and these are grades in which virtually no men are employed – secretaries, production assistants and continuity 'girls'. In the laboratories women predominate within the lower grades, while in certain of the higher grades women are altogether absent. In such a situation, in spite of equal pay, women in the industry earn much less than most men, almost 50 per cent of women earning less than £40 per week. The Report reveals the job structure in general as one which under-values women's skills and refuses to acknowledge their domestic responsibilities. It analyses the nature of discrimination within the industry in terms of overt discrimination, the undervaluation of jobs primarily done by women, educational and social 'conditioning' and the lack of training facilities, job structure and work relationships, the denial of women's right to work by both State and employers, the lack of union activity and commitment and, finally, the social structure and inadequacies of legislation. From an examination of this evidence, the Report goes on to make specific proposals which include equal pension rights, twenty-six weeks' maternity leave and four weeks' paternity leave, crèche facilities and a 15 per cent quota of women in each grade and on training courses, to be made available for any job requiring skills specific to the industry.

Faced with the recession in the film industry, the consequent weakness of the union's bargaining power and the general con-

126 traction in job opportunities as a whole, it is difficult to assess what impact a report of this kind, written from a distinctly feminist perspective, will have. It is worth noting that while the Report was passed by membership at the 1975 Annual Conference, there was virtually no debate of the issues and the individual recommendations, and the Report itself has not been circulated to the membership as a whole. Also because of the limitations of time and resources imposed by the union on the research, the Report had to rely heavily on contemporary evidence of discrimination, and was thus unable to examine in any detail how the present structure of employment could be substantially changed in the short term. Dividing its concerns broadly between the need for a change in consciousness by workers, the union and employers on the one hand, and the need to question 'the way the industry is financed and controlled' on the other, the Report is unable to give clear indications as to the economic determinants and the matrix of social relations which underpin discrimination and are specific to the film industry. Instead it asserts the notion of a kind of 'Golden Age' of the Second World War and the hey-day of the studio system as a standard for judging the contemporary evidence, which makes little sense of the real dimensions of the current problem given the contraction of the film industry, the collapse of the big studios and the economic pressures towards freelance work. Only if the question is examined in these terms can any real change in the position of women in the industry be effected, and the sources of new structures of employment be discerned. To ask workers to question 'the nature of an industry, an economy, a society, where unemployment and its social consequences are such a threat' is clearly not enough, nor can the real divisions of interest between workers in terms of class and sex in an industry like the film industry be explained in terms of the ownership/non-ownership of the means of production. Quite apart from a theoretical analysis of the labour market, the industry and the union structure, issues of discrimination within a craft union such as the ACTT must be viewed within the context of ideological determinations stemming from the nature of the union itself. In many ways it reflects the petty-bourgeois, individualistic ethos characteristic of the 'creative' craft unions, revealed for example by the considerable social distance between members in film production and those in the laboratories. The emphasis on middle-class status distinctions, entrepreneurial and anti-collective values are an important ideological factor to be taken into account when assessing the development of egalitarian notions, among women as well as among men. While the market situation and job insecurity have undoubtedly increased class consciousness within the union in recent years, internal skill differentiation, criteria of prestige and occupational achievement, the highly personalised labour market (with union members often operating as employers)

and the social fragmentation of the work place still militate heavily against the development of this consciousness. In this sense, the feminist position which the Report articulates and its fundamental egalitarianism stand in sharp contrast to the characteristically corporatist mode of consciousness of the union as a whole, its fundamentally defensive nature, and its ideological parochialism, all of which help obfuscate a vital area of awareness. The feminist perspective demands a cultural as well as a political critique and this necessarily contradicts the sectoral, introverted and fundamentally pragmatic ethos of corporatist consciousness. While the Report in many ways originates precisely from the pragmatism of the union context, and its analysis in some way affirms it, it nevertheless ultimately puts that pragmatism into question.

For this reason, it is worth examining how the Report deals with the question of sexist ideology itself. While one of the recommendations is that the union should consider the Code of Practice on Sexism in the Media at present being debated by women in the media unions, the Report does not deal with sexism in the content of the media. Nevertheless, the notion is implicit in it, if not explicit, in the constant reference to the somewhat behaviourist idea of 'conditioning':

'Those who share in "conditioning" men and women to sex roles – the media, advertisers, schools – will not suddenly stop putting over images of the perfect secretary, the perfect sex symbol; not only because the media do not see their role as changing social ideas, but also because the roles women have are, at present, necessary to the economy'.

The notion of sexist ideology as simple 'conditioning' is quite clearly inadequate and by-passes the considerable body of work on the subject which has emerged from the Marxist-Feminist current in the Women's Movement which sees sexist ideology in terms of the constant reproduction of relations of domination and subordination (see Juliet Mitchell's feminist reading of Freud in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, Pelican Books), extending Althusser's thesis as to the essentially imaginary nature of ideology, which places the subject in position in society. The ideological formation in this sense, while intimately linked to the economic one, possesses a relative autonomy and its own laws. The definition of sexist ideology as 'conditioning' constitutes, in my view, a fundamental flaw in the Report for feminism, in that it by-passes any necessity for struggle on the terrain of sexist ideology itself for women workers in the media. In this respect, the Report's approach parallels the way the ACTT report *Nationalising the Film Industry* regarded cultural struggle as peripheral, believing that with the transfer of the film industry from the private sector to the public sector the industry's social as well as its economic function would inevitably change radically. It is at this point that the feminist critique breaks down

128 and the fundamentally economist assumptions underlying the Report become manifest, though the suggestion is made that the union might consider examining this whole area at some later date. It is crucial that women in the communications industries see the need to struggle as workers to change the sexist nature of the media in which they are employed, in the same way that it is crucial for women teachers to become aware of the ideological nature of their role within the educational structure (the struggle for non-sexist teaching materials is a manifestation of this realisation). The introduction of a code of practice is a useful first step in this cultural struggle, but it would have to be augmented by industrial action at some stage, and to be ultimately effective the introduction of some analysis of discourse as such into union activities (preferably in training schemes suggested in the Report) would have to be envisaged. As John Ellis suggests in his article on Ealing Studies in the last issue of *Screen*, 'It is necessary to think a radical change in the social relations of production at the same time as a radical change in the social relations of consumption: The two enterprises cannot progress separately'. The feminist critique of the media must of necessity make these connections.

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